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AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH SOCCER WEEKLY

VOL. 19 No. 861 – TUESDAY JANUARY 20, 1998 • REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST — PUBLICATION No NBQ5726 $2.50

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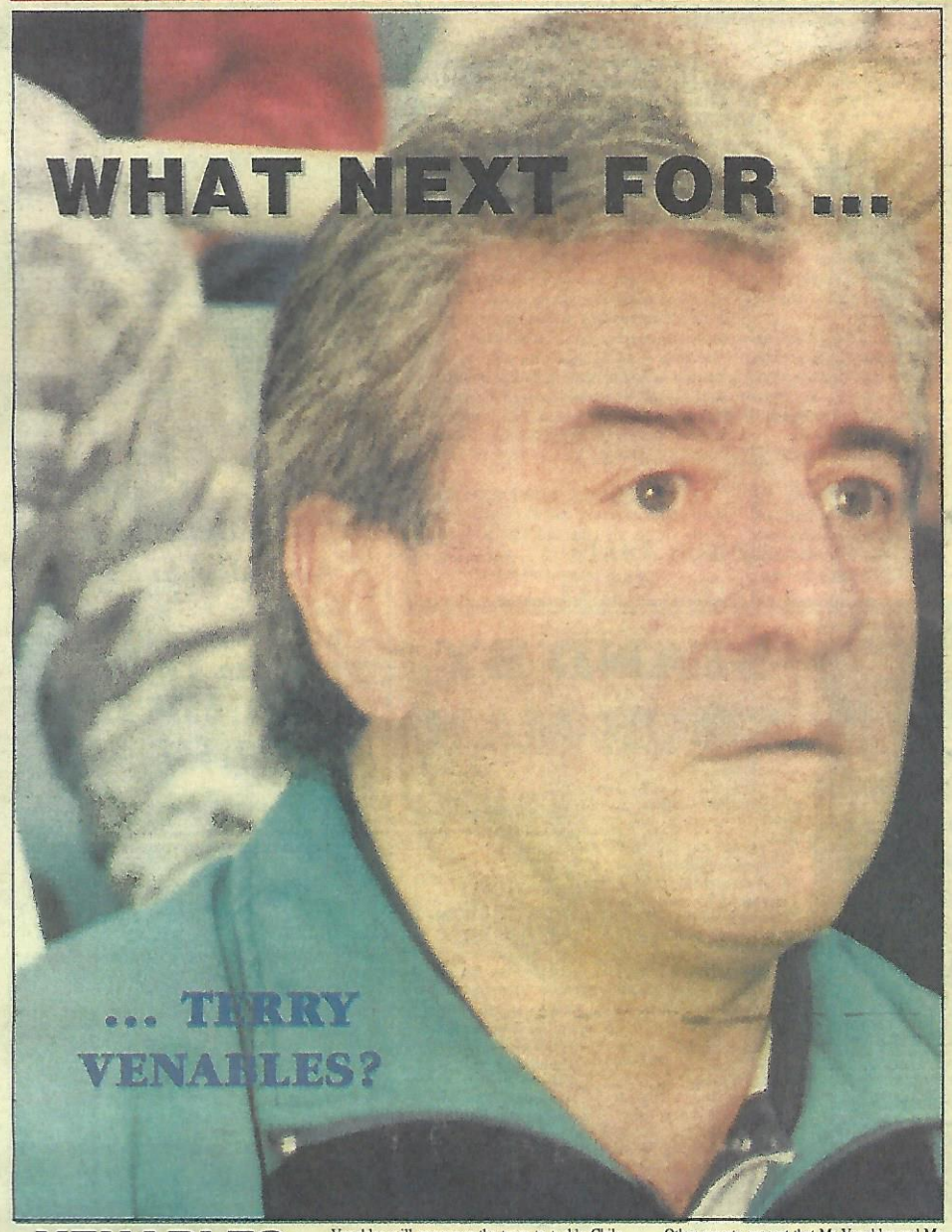

VENABLES BANNED

Australian national coach Terry Venables has agreed to a London High Court order banning him from holding company directorships for seven years, according to English media reports.

The court case revolved around alleged mismanagement of four companies, including Scribes West, Venables' nightclub in London's west end, and Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, of which he is a former manager.

Venables' solicitor said before the hearing that the disqualification would 'not stop him from continuing with any of his jobs.'

He has also agreed to relinquish control of First Division club Portsmouth, where several Australian national players ply their trade.

Soccer Australia stated, via a press release, that Venables will announce the team to tackle Chile, Japan and South Korea in the Optus World Series Challenge, this Thursday morning, 'live' via satellite from the UK.

Other reports suggest that Mr Venables and Mr Hill will be holding talks in Australia, in the extreme near future, about the former England managers continuing involvement with soccer in this country, several European club sides having been mentioned that are interested in his services.

The latest of those has been one half of the 'auld firm' in Scotland, Glasgow Rangers, who are reputedly interested in Venables taking over when Walter Smith steps down at the end of this present campaign, and could also prove a turning point in the career of Paul Gascoigne.

'Gazza' has not had the best of times in since going to Rangers, not on the playing side, as his behaviour has, apparently, worsened. Venables could be the man to sort him, as he did when taking him to Tottenham from Newcastle when manager of the north London Club.

Keep watching for further developments.

ALL THE LOCAL MATCH REPORTS, RESULTS & STATS PAGES 8-11

YOUNG GUNS SPECIAL 2 CENTRE PAGES

ALL THE LATEST INTERNATIONAL NEWS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SOCCER EVERY TUESDAY

Editorial

Many of the letters in recent weeks have centred around two distinct issues:

1/ Australia's failure to reach the World Cup Finals and,

2/ The role of 'ethnic' (read as traditional) clubs in Australian football.

The first has been covered in many ways, as has the second, but it appears time to let a few home truths out of the bag which, it has become abundantly clear, none of the individual writers seem to give a damn about.

Let us look at the simple scenario of a 'traditional' club against Perth Glory, in a purely demonstrative way only, and based on 60% of the average crowd, cash spent by many over the season but levelled out to an average per home game etc.

Average Crowds Per Game
Trad Club 5,000 Perth 15,000

*Car Parking (*based on 60%)*
Trad Club $21,000 Perth $63,000

Entry @ $10 per head
Trad Club $50,000 Perth $150,000

Beverages @ $10
Trad Club $60,000 Perth $90,000

Merchandise @ $20 per home game
Trad Club $60,000 Perth $180,000

Totals:
Trad Club $161,000 Perth $483,000

Now multiply that by the 13 home matches and we arrive at:

Trad club $2,093,000
Perth $6,279,000

What does this mean?

It translates that Perth will become the richest club in the land and by so doing, will reap the benefits and luxuries of being able to afford the best players, best facilities, largest support, biggest generated revenue from merchandise, food and drink, TV rights (when fully applicable) and CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP DOLLARS!

On the other hand, the 'traditional' club can look forward to falling attendances, decreasing revenue, lower grade players and a one-way trip to oblivion in the fast lane.

When will everyone realise that the time has arrived for ALL soccer supporters, of all clubs, to rally around and get behind their local team instead of continuing the 'but it's the ethnics that made the game here and started the clubs' facade that has lasted far too many years.

Times are changing and so must the thinking of the fans.

No club, irrespective of who they are, will be able to compete with the likes of Perth, and most likely the newer clubs when they enter the league, on crowds of 5,000 and under. They will be left behind to dwell on where 'national pride' got them.

Most board members realise this, a soccer club is a business after all, and in the best interests of their club, must move with the times.

The question I posed some weeks ago still remains unanswered: "Do those who chant 'nationalistic' slogans at games really support the product on the pitch or the misguided nationalism they display?"

In many cases it appears a case of fervour for a country/place yet to be visited by those who practice this, using the soccer match as a meeting place to air this laundry.

The facts remain, if you support the club you will want the best for it. If you support what it initially once represented, you will soon find yourselves chanting in an empty stadium with no players and weeds growing in the centre circle.

Alright, that would be the most drastic outcome, but it can be avoided.

It matters not one bit what language or religion you follow in life, in soccer, the feet do the talking and they are listed in the all time conversationalists' album of achievement.

Nobody is saying that those who founded the club — and nurtured it through the good and bad times — must ever forget their roots, but if this misplaced national pride is not held in check, and soon, you will not have a soccer match as a meeting place for social and visual enjoyment.

Do the maths yourself, and when you think about that think about this: Do I support the World Game, my club and want to help it grow?

If not, so long. It's been good to know you.

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STAND BY YOUR MAN

By Glenn Davis

Frank Farina has sprung to the defence of sacked skipper Andy Harper, who was again missing from the side's 2-1 win over Wollongong Wolves last weekend.

Farina said he still had a lot of faith in Harper, who has struggled to find form for his new club this season.

"He's still in my plans this year," the Strikers player/coach said.

"I wasn't real pleased with what I'd been hearing around the traps about Andy, some people had attributed our bad season to him so I put him out for two weeks.

"You don't become a bad player in three months. He had a stint in China just before he signed with us, which I think worked against him, and his wife has only just moved up here from Sydney.

"He's only been here a short time and already he's had two house moves."

Farina believes Harper will eventually turn people's eyes and prove the club's decision to sign him from Marconi was the right move.

Frank Farina was to meet with Strikers' board member Ian Brusasco yesterday (Monday) with a number of matters up for discussion, including his own playing future.

The former Socceroo star striker said he would continue to play as long as he's contributing on the field as a player, but believes a player-coach role at national league level is very demanding.

Eight Strikers players come off contract at the end of the season and their futures also are certain to be discussed.

Frank Farina: Standing by his close-season signing.

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7-9 Garners Ave., Marrickville NSW 2204. Tel (02) 9562-0500. Fax (02) 9558-5332 Email: soccer@foreignlanguage.com.au
Published every Tuesday by FLP Pty Ltd. 7-9 Garners Ave Marrickville NSW 2204

DISTRIBUTION
NSW/ACT: FLP Pty Ltd. 7 Garners Ave Marrickville NSW 2204. Tel: (02) 9562- 0500
VICTORIA: FLP Pty Ltd. Unit 9, 405 Flemington Road, North Melbourne, VIC 3051. Tel: (03) 9329-1636 Fax: (03) 9329-1342
QUEENSLAND: Queensland Newspaper Campbell St, Bowen Hills Qld. 4006 Tel: (07) 3252-6011
SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Advertiser Newspaper Ltd. Waymouth St, Adelaide SA 5000 Tel: (08) 8218-9329
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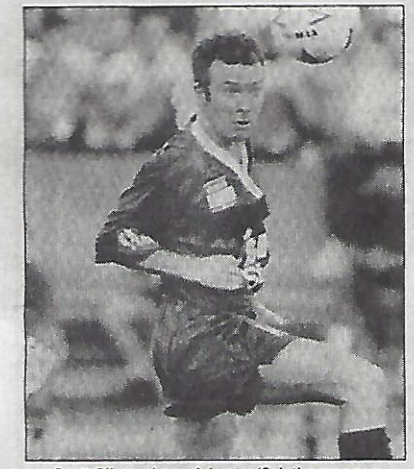
GOOD OIL GOOD OIL GOOD OIL GOOD OIL

By John Economos

NORTHERN SPIRIT, as 'Good Oil' predicted early last week, was officially admitted entry into the Ericsson National Soccer League for the 1998-99 season by Soccer Australia last Sunday afternoon.

Playing in the colours of Red, Blue and Gold, and based at North Sydney Oval, Northern Spirit will be Sydney's first, and Australia's second only full-time professional club.

Australia's newest club in the National League will embrace the three local Associations of Gladesville-Hornsby, Ku-Ring-Gai and Manly Juniors.



Scott Ollerenshaw: A former 'Saint', now a new 'Spirit'.

The Spirit will have a reservoir of juniors to draw from in future years under its umbrella, right now estimated to number well over 23,000 playing in local competitions.

Former World Cup striker Graham Arnold has been signed as player-coach, but the Spirit missed out on signing Australia's attacking left midfielder Aurelio Vidmar, who late last week was snapped up by French First Division side Chateauroux.

The Spirit is believed to have also offered favourable terms to Southampton's Robbie Slater for consideration.

Most surprisingly the Spirit has been able to snare back to Australia from the Malaysian National Soccer League, ace-goalscorer Scott Ollerenshaw.

The former St George winger was sold to Sydney Olympic seven years ago for a record $45,000 fee.

The pacey and gutsy Scotty moved to Apia-Leichhardt then to Wollongong City, before being finally snapped up by Sabah from the Malaysian National League.

'Good Oil' is also most aware the Spirit is working very hard and is dangling a most lucrative offer in front of the eyes of a 'high-profiled' goalkeeper. And he's NOT one from overseas.

☆ ☆ ☆

NOW that the Northern Spirit has been officially added to our National League, the still, and yet vexing question, remains for the time being, totally unanswered.

Will the League next season be expanded to 16 with the admittance of the Auckland Kings, who were interviewed last week by Soccer Australia officials, or will one of the current clubs be axed at the end of the season?

One or the other MUST happen.

A National Soccer League with just 15 clubs would surely be most unacceptable.

☆ ☆ ☆

FOUR players from Raul Blanco's brand new Australian Olympic Games squad will next Monday participate in the 'Barnados Mini-Olympics' organised to allow handicapped children the wonderful and unique opportunity to participate in organised games with their respective and various sporting idols.

Sydney United's ace trio Dean and Jason Culina plus Jacob Burns, as well as Sydney Olympic's Carlos Gonzales, will link up with such other sporting celebrities as Jane Fleming (track star) and Greg Matthews (cricket) in the 'Barnados Mini Olympics' that will include basketball, mini volleyball as well as an egg and spoon race.

International courier Company, United Parcel Services, will donate no less than $150,000 of sporting equipment and sportswear to the long serving Barnados cause.

'Good Oil' informs its readers they can watch these most worthy 'Barnados Mini-Olympics' next Monday between 11am and 12:45pm at the Palm Grove (adjacent to the IMAX Theatre) at Sydney's Darling Harbour.

Be There...Please.

☆ ☆ ☆

SYDNEY OLYMPIC's deadline last Friday afternoon, calling for tenders to buy out its cash-strapped Soccer Club, attracted only the same two bidding parties who were already known well prior to the tender lists being thrown open.

Flamboyant finance figure, Rene Rivkin, ($1.4million) and a four man multi-millionaire syndicate calling its self 'Friends of Sydney Olympic', and headed up by Sydney businessman Nick Politis (head honcho of City Ford), submitted a complicated, if not spiralling, offer totalling $11.4 million to be spread over a five year period.

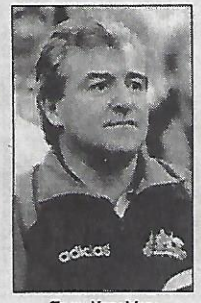
The Club's members will meet on the last day of this month to discuss, then ratify, which of the two offers should be accepted.

☆ ☆ ☆

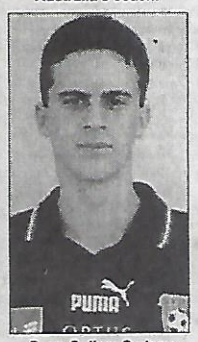
TERRY VENABLES on Thursday morning (10.30am in fact), will release his Australian squad, (via live satellite direct from England), that will clash in the coming three match 'Optus World Series' to be played from early next month.

Australia's three opponents, (all of whom have qualified for this year's World Cup finals in France), are Chile, South Korea and Japan on February 7th, 11th and 15th.

'Good Oil' fully anticipates Venables' squad will be drawn almost exclusively from our domestic based players, and not involve the monumental headaches by attempting to draft in some of our World Cup players based in Europe.



Terry Venables: Australia's coach.



Dean Culina: Sydney United's elegant sweeper.

☆ ☆ ☆

SEAN BABIC, Marconi's explosive-paced striker, (already, without naming him, and subtly hinted three weeks back by 'Good Oil'), is off to try his luck in the tough business of Italy's Serie A.

The hungry to learn Babic departs from Sydney on February 1st, escorted by Marconi's Soccer Administrator Frank Labbozzetta, for a two week trial extended to him by Empoli in the northern regions of Italy.

Mr Labbozzetta stated to 'Good Oil' last night: "We were asked to send copies of videos highlighting Sean's play with Marconi and the people over there were impressed enough to invite him to Italy for urgent trials.

"Should Sean please the coaching staff at Empoli, then Club Marconi, as it has done on numerous occasions with other players, will not stand in Sean's way," promised Mr Labbozzetta.

Meanwhile Club Marconi this Saturday night is holding a large fund-raising dinner for its youth team that will also travel to Italy early next month to participate in Europe's most prestigious Youth competition, the 'Viareggio Soccer Tournament' (see full preview spread on page 5).

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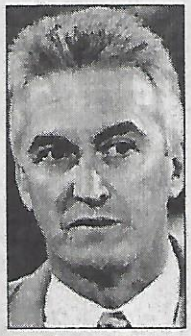


Eddie Thomson: Wanted by Japan.

EDDIE THOMSON, former coach of Australia's World Cup team, has been back in Sydney since the New Year, quietly soaking up our lovely sunshine whilst the J-League in frosty Japan is in recess.

It comes as no surprise, that yet again, strong rumblings are erupting back in the 'Land Of The Rising Sun' and the Crashing Yen, calling for Big Eddie to takeover Japan's World Cup team.

Meanwhile, Terry Venables, Thomson's successor, is also due back in Australia this weekend to have urgent talks with Soccer Australia officials to discuss his contract till the end of July, managing our national team.

A quietly looming cloud containing some strong vibes of uncertainty seems to have lately appeared in the skies concerning Venables' future immediately after he pilots the Australian team in the Optus World Series early next month.

Could Venables be considering 'bailing-out' from Australian Soccer?

If so, who would be on the short list to takeover?

Thomson would be the most logical choice once his commitments with his current J-League club Hiroshima are completed.

If not Thomson, then Zoran Matic. If not Matic, why not David Mitchell? Look at just what he has done with Sydney United.

Sean Babic: Off to Italy early next month.

☆ ☆ ☆

FRANK MIKULETIC, Adelaide Sharks' goalkeeper, most unfortunately, will be out of action for at least nine months, recovering from a complete knee reconstruction.

★ ★ ★

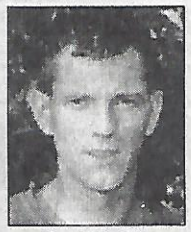
Michael Reda, Wollongong City's fiery midfielder will be out of action for the rest of the season due to a broken ankle.

★ ★ ★

Andrew ('Stabber') Marth, celebrated his 250th game in the NSL most strangely, having to fill in as goalkeeper for most of the second half against South Melbourne when regular towering custodian Joe Didulica was stretchered off. Big 'Stabber' in fact gallantly excelled, making no less than three professional blocks-and all with the gloves at that, which he volunteered to don.

★ ★ ★

Pan Keun Kim, Marconi's South Korean World Cup sweeper, has now signed to stay with Marconi till the end of the season and not for his originally planned, and already completed, six matches.

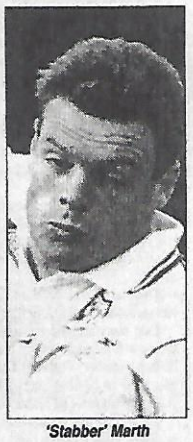


Frank Mikuletic

★ ★ ★

Frank Farina, player-coach of current League champions the Brisbane Strikers, is two matches short of knocking up his 'double-ton' of games in the Ericsson National League.

Frank Farina: 198 and counting.



'Stabber' Marth

EX-SUPER LEAGUE PLAYER

Level 2 Coach

Seeks position with senior Federation team

Contact: Peter Berry

☎ 9896 4582

HAWKESBURY CITY

SOCCER CLUB

YOUTH LEAGUE 1998 SEASON

Training will re-commence for all Youth League teams on Tuesday, 20 January, 1998 at 6pm at Richmond Park.

A limited number of vacancies still exist in 14s, 15s and 16s. Interested players should contact Dave Bertenshaw on (02) 4578 2415 or Gordon Gillespie on (02) 4579 6252.

FEDERATION DIVISION 3

Trials for Hawkesbury's Federation Division 3 First and Reserve grades teams will commence on Tueday 20 January at 7.30pm at Richmond Park.

All interested players welcome to trial.

AROUND THE CLUBS

Illawarra News

IT'S OFFICAL: WOLVES MEAN BUSINESS

By Phil Murphy

The Wollongong Wolves are officially privatised. Last week, the club's consortium elected a seven-man board and they were to elect a chairman last night (Monday).

There were 11 nominations for the board and those elected were:

Joe Cachia — Developer and Wollongong City Councillor.

Max Hobbs — Director of K. and R. Fabrications and chairman of Fernhill soccer club.

John Lambert — Managing director of Lambert Kitchens.

Denis Suess — Managing director of Indent Tiles.

Walter Boscoscuro — Managing director of Central Fabrications.

Joe Pellegrino — Accountant with Pellegrino, Russo and Associates.

Doug Symes — Stockbroker.

It is believed either Cachia or Symes will get the job of Chairman.

Cachia, who chaired last week's meeting, said he did not believe things would change at the club. He said he would expect things to continue the way they were going at the moment.

There are 18 consortium members and each has invested $50,000 into the club.

Two more members are expected to join in the near future injecting a total of one million dollars into the Wolves. The surprise of the election was that the Illawarra Soccer Association won't be on the board.

Association treasurer John Cowland narrowly missed out on making 'the top seven'.

Before the meeting, Wolves Chairman for the last six years, Brian Hastings, said he would not be seeking a place on the board.

He said he needed to spend more time at his business. "I will offer my services on a consultancy basis if the board wants a hand," he said.

"Over the last six years, I have gained a lot of knowledge on the Australian scene. I think I might be able to help the board in some capacity."

The Wolves are having a very successful season on and off the field.

Before last Saturday night's away game against Brisbane, they were fifth on the table.

For their last two home games, against Carlton and Adelaide City, they attracted more than 14,000 people to Brandon Park.

The consortium could not be taking over a better time.

The Wolves are creating a lot of interest in Wollongong and expect another big crowd for Sunday night's home game against Melbourne Knights.

TRAGEDY FOR REDA

However the bad news for the Wolves this week has been the loss of Michael Reda for the rest of the season.

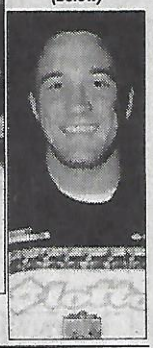
Reda was stretchered from the field agianst Adelaide City and X-rays revealed he suffered a broken ankle — the same injury wingback Neil Harlock suffered against Gippsland earlier in the season.

Harlock resumed light training last week but has only a slim chance of playing again this season.

Wolves coach Nick Theodorakopoulos described Reda's injury as a tragedy.

The midfielder had been one of the team's most consistent players in recent weeks.

Michael Reda (above)



Neil Harlock (below)

Victoria Update

VALE: PETER GRGURIC

By Dwyght Tuffnell

Peter Grguric was a player destined for great things. A junior champion who was selected for his state and country at schoolboy level, Peter had the world at his feet.

But his young life was cut cruelly short last week when he drowned at Phillip island whilst swimming with some friends.

He was aged just 17.

The community in Victoria has been shocked with the loss of a life not just talented as Peter was, but as young as he was with so much too live for, a life with so many realistic, yet unfulfilled dreams.

His list of awards and honours looks like that of player much older than his tender years, such was the potential Peter had.

Peter represented the Australian Schoolboys team on recent tours of New Zealand and South America.

In the competition in South America, Peter was recognised with the award for the second best player in the tournament.

Peter also represented Victoria with distinction playing in the victorious 1997 championships in Adelaide.

At 15, he played for Melbourne Knights youth team, the youngest player in the side.

He had played juniors with Springvale City and was playing in the National Youth League for Bulleen Inter Kings.

Peter had been on loan to Bulleen, but in the short period he had been there he made many friends, according to club spokesman Frank Ruffolo.

"The whole club is devastated," said Ruffolo.

"He was a player who had an outstanding future ahead of him…it has just sent a shock throught he entire club."

Bulleen were keen to add Peter to their senior squad for the coming season and had invited him to train with the first team squad just a couple of days before the tragic event.

Jim Gleeson, a man who knew his capabilities better then most, coaching him for Bulleen, Victorian Schoolboys as well as assistant for Australian Schoolboys, said that Peter was "a genuine prospect who loved his soccer."

Gleeson said that Peter was a terrific leader on the park and very popular off it.

"His always seemed to be great fun and full of laughs, he had a wide circle of friends."

A certain star of the future, Peter's dreams were to play at the Olympics and represent Australia at senior level.

The staff at ASBSW wish to extend our deepest sympathies to Peter's family.

Peter Grguric: Top left (above) with his team.

Newcastle News

By Dane Skafte

ZANE TO EUROPE?

Before the end of the season, if all things go to plan, Newcastle Topper Breakers striker Clayton Zane will leave the club for Europe.

The 20 year old Olyroo squad member has already been approached by three NSL clubs to play next season, but the lanky goalscorer has already indicated that he would rather play in Belgium because it suits his height.

Zane missed the match last Friday night against Gippsland through a one-match suspension.

Breakers general manager Pat Clarke stated that the Breakers would not stop Zane from leaving Newcastle before the end of the season if a European club offers the right money.

Clarke also said that if Zane stayed in Australia that the club would make every effort to keep the young striker in the Newcastle region.

Zane has also missed the services of fellow striker Troy Halpin who transferred to the Perth Glory two weeks ago.

PLAYERS NEEDED

Breakers General Manager Pat Clarke said last week that to be competitive the club needed to allocate up to $500,000 to buy two or three players for 1998/99.

ABSW understands in the next couple of weeks Soccer Australia will put out a list of players whose contracts finish at the end of the season. Newcastle will closely look at this list.

Clarke said it was very obvious that they have to increase their budget and to look on the transfer list when it is released by Soccer Australia.

"If we are to stay competitive for next season we must strengthen," he said.

JUNIOR DEVELOPMENT

Newcastle Breakers are in the process of developing a Junior scheme which will include the entry of four Breakers teams in age groups 13 to 16 in the NSW Federation comeptition.

The venture would cost the club $100,000 a year and would be headed by Breakers coach John Kosmina and Northern NSW Federation coach Ken Kaiser.

And with the obvious talent in the region, its representation in the Ericsson Cup and its capacity to produce quality players, this should further enhance the area's reputation as one of the nation's premier breeding grounds for Soccer players.

AUBURN UNITED
SOCCER CLUB
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FRIDAY NIGHTS
TIME: 6.30pm
1st Grade — Reserves — U/18
VENUE:
Mona Park, Auburn
CONTACT: John Karacan 9646 4897
Ali 0418 677 379
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT
KADRI SERTBAS (MOBILE)
019 405 366
(HOME)
9871 3467

FRASER PARK SOCCER CLUB NSW SOCCER FEDERATION
Pre-Season Training and Selection
Coach: GERRY GOMEZ
Starting: JAN 20 & 22
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100 Marrickville Rd, Marrickville
All enquiries:
Gerry: 0412958216
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HAJDUK WANDERERS
SOCCER CLUB
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1998 NSW Soccer Federation
Second Division Trials
Venue: **Harold Read Park, Girraween Road, Girraween**
TIME: 7PM (SHARP)
Firsts & U/21s: Every Tue & Thurs (Jan 20)
U/18s: Every Monday & Wed (Jan 21)
**Also U/21 coach required*
FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
Charles Abdilla: 0411 525908 or 9757 2906
Phillip Pavela (Head Coach) (B) 9752 9888
(AH) 9896 7096 (M) 0416 209140

MARCONI AGAIN OFF TO VIAREGGIO — ITALY

BY JOHN ECONOMOS

MARCONI's youth team, for the fourth consecutive year, has been invited by Italy's 'Centro Giovani Calciatori' to compete in Europe's most prestigious Under/20s Tournament, the "Torneo Mondiale di Calcio-Viareggio (World Youth Soccer Tournament of Viareggio).

The world famous 'Viareggio Soccer Tournament' was first staged back in 1949 where A.C. Milan won by defeating Lazio in the Final.

The tournament has taken place every single year since, but over the period to date has been expanded to include no less than 32 teams split into eight groups of four teams.

Marconi's youth squad that competed in Viareggio last year.

THREE AUSSIE STARS AT VIAREGGIO

In years gone by, no less than three very well known stars of Australian Soccer have all played at the Viareggio Tournament.

The very first, back in 1951, was Yugal's attacking left midfield wizard of the early 70s, Ferdo Dunaj who participated with Partizan.

Former Sydney Olympic sweeper Kenny Wilson had the extremely rare distinction of playing in three consecutive tournaments at Viareggio (75,76,77) whilst playing with Glasgow Rangers.

Alistair Edwards, also a former Sydney Olympic player, played in the Viareggio Tournament in 1986, whilst on the books with Rangers.

This year's tournament, as well as celebrating its 50th year, will include no less than three teams from Brazil (Vitoria, Trineu and Nacional) and as was the case last year, a team each has been entered by giant clubs Manchester United and Ajax of Amsterdam.

A most notable highlight this year at Viareggio, underlining the seriousness and quality of this competition, is the fact that former Italian World Cup skipper, Franco Baresi, will be in charge of A.C. Milan's youth squad.

Baresi will have as his assistant none other than former A.C. Milan right midfield star and former Marconi guest player, Angelo ('the Detective') Colombo.

Marconi's youth captain last year, Michael Kladis with Manchester Utd's Phil Neville.

MARCONI IN GROUP 2

The draw for this tournament made late last week in Italy has Marconi drawn in Group 2 alongside Torino, Bologna and Savoia.

Last year Torino, easily the outstanding side in the tournament, defeated Marconi 2-0 and marched on to the Final where they were most unlucky to lose 1-0 to Bari.

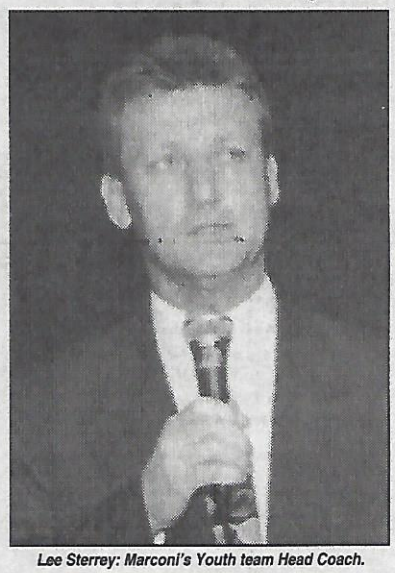
Prior to the inception of FIFA's Coca Cola World Youth Championships in 1977, the Viareggio Soccer Tournement was the world's No. 1 youth tournament boasting the 'Creme de la Creme' of Europe's finest young Soccer players.

As is still the case today, the tournament magnetises club scouts from all over Europe on the lookout to snap up youth players on lucrative contracts.

Viareggio is a wealthy small township wedged on a beach strip on the north west coast of Italy, a little over half an hour by road west of the historic little township of Pisa where the world renowned Leaning Tower is situated, which, by the way, has been under repairs by engineers in the past six-years.

MARCONI'S COACH

Lee Sterrey, Zoran Matic's assistant, who will for the third consecutive year take charge of the Marconi youth team into this tournament, stated to ABSW last night: "It's a fabulous honour for our club to again be invited to participate in this high class tournament.



Lee Sterrey: Marconi's Youth team Head Coach.

"Last year in Round 1 we scored two draws against Udinese (0-0) and Manchester United (1-1) but lost out to top side Torino (2-0)."

Manchester United's side was captained by todays England World Cup defender Phil Neville. In fact Marconi had taken the lead 1-0 and it was not intil the last minute of the match that United was able to scramble in a goal from a cross to avoid the indignity of a loss to a virtually unknown small team such as Marconi's Youth side from Australia.

Marconi's coach, Sterrey, went on to add: "I feel a lot more confident this time as I will be selecting to take at least eight or nine players from last year's squad.

"This in itself will give us this time a lot more experience, balance and stability. Last year's squad was very young for this strong tournament," ended Sterrey.

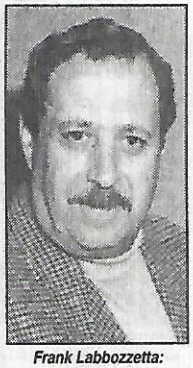
Sterrey will have as his assistant coach former international Adrian Alston and team physiotherapist Joe Mirigliani.

Tour leader again will be Marconi's Soccer Administrator Frank Labbozzetta whilst Marconi's Soccer Chairman and Club Vice President Mr Frank Baroni together with Club Director Mr Nello Pellegrino will also travel with the squad.

Last night Marconi's Soccer chief Frank Labbozzetta stated to ABSW, "I have known about Viareggio ever since I was a little kid that it was a very, very important and most prestigious Soccer tournament.

"Marconi again has been invited and I strongly suggest to one and all in Australian Soccer that there is no better tournament as it is a mecca for young outstanding players the world over to launch their careers on an international level.

"As you are probably aware of already, included in the thirty two teams competing there are nine non-Italian sides including three teams from Brazil, and one from Mexico, ended Mr Labbozzetta.



Frank Labbozzetta: Soccer Administrator

This year's Tournament kicks off on February 9th with the Final set down to be played 16 days later.

Marconi's travelling party departs on February 5th with Alitalia for Rome before catching a connecting flight to Pisa then progressing by bus to their headquarters at Albergo Losanna at Viareggio.

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8
Fiorentina	Marconi	Inter Milan	Atalanta	A.C. Milan	A.S. Roma	Juventus	Napoli
Ajax-Amsterdam	Torino	Vitoria (Brazil)	Partizan	Man United	B.M'gladbach	Nacional (Brazil)	Puma (Mexico)
Perugia	Bologna	Udinese	Lazio	Parma	Genoa	Bari	Empoli
Foggia.	Savo	Venezia	Lucchese	Trineu (Brazil)	Viareggio	Cagliari	Ravennia

I Disagree

Dear Sir,

I totally disagree with 'Alex' (published January 6 edition), as to why we must get rid of Adelaide Sharks, South Melbourne, UTS Olympic, Sydney United and Melbourne Knights.

Is it because the Sharks and Olympic were both known as 'Hellas' and United and Knights were called 'Croatia'?

That was ten years ago and heaps of changes have taken place since.

South Melbourne changed to 'Lakers', and Melbourne Knights changed from CSC (Croatian Soccer Club) to the Knights.

Clubs which don't attract big crowds this year, like Brisbane, Carlton, Newcastle and Olympic should be the ones to fold.

Bringing in a team from New Zealand is a joke! It would mean financial problems for some clubs flying over there to play them.

This is AUSTRALIAN soccer, not a Pacific league. I don't see a Scottish club playing in the FA Carling Premiership, or a Spanish side playing in the Serie A.

We should have our own NSL and the Kiwis can keep their league.

D Peppas
Pasadena, SA

Editor's note:

No doubt that a New Zealand entry into the Ericsson Cup would have certain restrictions placed upon it, such as Auckland Warriors did in the ARL. A precedent has already been set though, with Berwick Rangers, an English club, playing in the Scottish league.

South Melbourne will have to change from 'Lakers' as they contravene an American Basketball team's copyright, and lastly, anyone who writes ABSW RULES! on the back of their envelope is OK by us.

Cheers.

Paul Trimboli: Over 300 games for South Melbourne.

Letters to the Editor

Have your say on any soccer issue in the world. Preference will be given to short letters. Include daytime phone number for verification.

Short letters of about 400 words will be given preference in this column.

The opinions expressed on this page do not necessarily reflect those of this newspaper

ETHNIC CLUBS

Dear Sir,

In your edition No.856, the article by Stuart Jones entitled 'Changes? What Changes?', part of the answer to A. Edwards: 'Look at regional clubs in the cities away from ethnic bases', I ask why?

Why not give a hand to the ethnics and attempt to combine and unite them in order to raise the level and standards of Australian soccer. Surely that's the goal. No? The largest amount of money and support comes into the game via the ethnic communities while the mainstream Australian public, and their money, goes into anything other than soccer.

We need to introduce the Asian Cup and here are my thoughts on other changes:

1/ Increase the playing level in the Ericsson Cup,

2/ Hold tournaments with teams like Manchester United,

3/ Go back to afternoon soccer so that it becomes a family outing,

4/ The season should run from February to June and then from August to December in a two part competition,

5/ Establish relegation and promotion and,

6/ Introduce professionalism into the various divisions.

In addition, we should invite national teams such as: England B, Greece, Iran, Croatia, Mexico etc. and tell them we'll pick up the tab and offer prize money if they should win their matches BUT, if you lose or draw, we retain the cash.

As Australia is not an extension of Greece or England, or any other country for that matter, but is an extension of the world, Mr Hill's de-ethicising of the game is a good and valuable idea, but it will apply only on the day that emigration to Australia is completely stopped, not before. It appears that Mr Hill wants to kick out all nationalities except the English.

The Australian coach has always had the influence of the country from which they came, including the country of the chairman of Soccer Australia. To have our own unique style and pattern of play, long overdue that it is, we need to elect Australian born people, both for the role of Chairman and coach, because Australians alone can handle all the mixed nationalities.

Mr Hill can do one great favour for Australian soccer, announce his resignation as soon as possible.

Why can't players have ethnic names?

Why can't we have ethnic clubs?

Why can't we use our hard built ethnic stadiums?

We, the ethnics, who did all the pioneering work because there was no soccer in this country, 80% of present players are of ethnic origin, and developed soccer in Australia to what it is today. Now, finally that soccer is going somewhere, SA see and smell the money and we are told to go away, we're not wanted. If the sell-out Australian Rules clubs start a soccer team, such as Carlton in Melbourne, the situation would be exactly the same as to that in Sydney now with the exception that it would be OK for these clubs as they would be devoid of dreadful ethnic people.

If we are to better the play of the game here, give an Australian born person, who has Australian soccer in his heart (Johnny Warren as President and David Mitchell as national coach for example), a chance.

We do not need discrimination, contradiction and dictatorial nonsense. What we do need is a builder, an achiever to help the game grow and not the bullying tactics that appear the trend at present.

Anyway, bullying is not the 'Australian way' to the fair minded thinking person, nor a way of doing business with them.

So goodbye Mr Hill, the sooner the better.

R Marton,
St Marys, NSW

Editor's note:

I can't honestly be bothered to go over this ground again, although you may have some valid points, but I will leave it up to our readers to answer your missive. However, read the editorial and see how, hypothetically, things shape up. It's time for all to grasp the reality, not nationality.

Violence Increasing

Dear Sir,

With violence on the increase in overseas soccer, particularly against referees and their assistants in Spain, Argentina etc, I couldn't help thinking about what a friend of mine said about the sport.

He was a Rugby League supporter until 'Super League' came along and almost destroyed the game and, therefore, was looking to support Brisbane or a Gold Coast side in another football code, so I took him along to a couple of Strikers games last season (when they were playing particularly well), and he liked what he saw except for one small thing — he couldn't work out why ALL goals were worth the same amount of points instead of differing values.

For instance, a penalty goal is only worth the same as a crackerjack, thunderbolt strike from 30 metres, with a defender and a keeper to beat. He added that he didn't understand why an 'own goal' meant the same as a normally scored effort or if it should go in from a corner.

The easiest thing would be to dismiss his observations as the ravings of an uneducated person who has no knowledge about the World Game but, being a university educated person, I took his criticisms of the game seriously. This led me to thinking about why there is so much violence and mayhem as well as other bad behaviour in our game. It cannot be just passion or the size of the sport worldwide.

Then I thought, 'Why is a penalty goal worth the same as any other strike on target or an own goal amount to equal in total a 30 metre strike'?

My friend's suggestion was for a system of differing goal values, as follows: A penalty or own goal — one point, and progressive points, 3-4 etc, for those goals from outside the box and so on.

His reasoning to all of this is that the games should not be won or lost on what the referee decides is a penalty or free-kick situation, rather it is won by the better team on the day. This scenario would also lead to fewer draws.

The referee would still have the option of sending a player off as well as awarding a penalty of course, and the added bonus of taking a lot of pressure off the officials too.

Needless to say, after watching a couple of games and trying to convince him of the merits of the sport, he is now a confirmed Brisbane Lions Australian Rules fan, but no longer follows Rugby League.

Do thousands of other disenchanted League fans also want to follow other codes of football?

I wonder what Sepp Blatter and the officials at FIFA would think if they ever got a chance to read this letter?

D Scullino
Nerang, Qld.

Editor's note: Let me try and explain a few very simple facts for your friend: 1/ The reason the great game is so popular is that we DON'T have differing point values for scoring. One point if you miss the target in Rules, too many ways to collect points in Rugby and the variations of Basketball's system etc.

This leads to the reaction you see from the fans when a goal is scored and, in many ways, helps to explain the violence. It is an affront to any fan if their team loses and most supporters feel and believe the club, ground etc belongs to them, they are defending their territory from those who seek to trespass. Race and religion play no part in this, it makes no odds, defending what belongs to you is the sole reason for trouble at football. Though it cannot be condoned by any rational person, it is nothing more, nothing less than that what is stated. Ask your 'friend' this: WHY must a single scoring effort be worth more points than any other?

Is it too hard to comprehend, as it appears in America, that a single strike on goal is exactly that! I will rue the day should this system, which has stood the test of time for longer than most other sports, be changed, varied, altered, played with or allowed to be placed into the hands of 'uni' educated friends. Learn the game, feel the passion, live the dream before anyone dare utter such garbage. If your friend's game was 'almost destroyed' by meddling outsiders, surely he/she must realise they have no right to wish alterations on someone else's sport simply because they do not understand the finer points of it.

Now you can also send your letters to ABSW's email address at:

soccer@foreignlanguage.com.au

We encourage you to use this service.

I Disagree Too!

Dear Sir,

In the recent edition of ABSW, January 6, 1998, under the article 'Football Australia' written by 'Alex', he quotes: 'Some clubs are only averaging 5,000 people per game. In my opinion, clubs like South Melbourne, Sydney United, UTS Olympic, Melbourne Knights and Adelaide Sharks must be replaced by new 'Australian' backed clubs'.

Does he mean Carlton perhaps, a team that has poached ethnic players and have a crowd of around 2,000 approx?

New clubs, with their no ethnic origin players and capable of development, I don't think such a thing exists here and as for new Australian clubs with 5,000 plus supporters..?

The Australians find soccer not rough enough for their liking and they don't understand the offside rules, so they shy away from it. If I am wrong about the supporters, where are those new Australian backed clubs? Why don't they come out of the woodwork and start new clubs alongside those of ethnic origin.

We won't bite them!

I think 'Alex' is of English origin because he has their arrogant mentality of 'We are English and we won't mix with the ethnics and can do without them'. Or is he of Italian origin, because he didn't mention Marconi or Adelaide City.

Whether this is the case or not, don't even dream about attempting to poach supporters from ethnic clubs.

The social clubs were founded to provide music, cooking, and meetings from the old country of the same nationality and so on, but above all it was to meet girls! As very few ladies are soccer fanatics, they stick mainly to the club and the majority of men are following them, rather than go to see a new 'Australian' club.

In my reasoning I may be wrong, but maybe I'm not but you 'Alex' need to go back to the drawing board.

I Tofei
Kingswood, NSW

Editor's note:

For anyone to suggest that anyone's heritage should be ignored is ridiculous. Having said that, and here we go again, ANY club that does not reach out to the entire community but languishes with tiny crowds made up of a certain section of it will perish. Social clubs are great for doing exactly what you have outlined but don't make football the loser by virtually stating that only ethnic people should attend matches. Italians, Scottish and English people are 'ethnics' in Australia too. Football is the game of the masses, not the minority and long may that continue.

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CONT'D ON PAGE 11

Rising Stars

National Youth League Rd 16

By Roy Hay

Southern Division

Bentleigh Greens and Heidelberg United drew two-all at Kingston Heath on Friday night. Con Papettas and Leigh Wilkinson scored for the Greens and Nick Papoutsis and Panteleimon Pasgas for the Bergers. Leigh Wilkinson, who joined the Greens from Cranbourne, had an excellent match in addition to his goal.

League leader Melbourne Knights had to come from behind to beat South Melbourne by two goals to one. The top team was stung when James Kasikakis fired in a shot after 27 minutes which took a wicked deflection off Andrija Batur, leaving keeper Andrew Belaich stranded.

Worse followed when Ivica Kolceg was sent-off for his second offence late in the first half. Six minutes into the second half Michael Bosevski got to the byline and hammered over a cross which Louie Rozanitis deflected past his keeper, Chris Jones, while under pressure from John Kalabric.

Adis Kablar then put the South Melbourne defence under pressure and the referee construed that a ball played back in the direction of the keeper was a deliberate pass-back. When the keeper picked up the ball an indirect free was awarded, which was touched to Michael Bosevski who drove it into the net on 64 minutes.

Belaich was then penalised in turn for handling outside his area, but Nick Orlic, beginning his comeback with the youth team, fired the resultant free-kick into the Knights wall and the match ended with the Knights still ahead.

South Melbourne Rockets went down by four goals to two at home to Altona Magic It was two-all at the break with goals by Nondas Manolitis and Aytec Yilmaz in 18 and 20 minutes for the Rockets. But the Rockets had already given away an early own goal and Bill Trpcevski brought the Magic level in 36 minutes. Trpcevski added his second on the hour and Pece Cergovski rounded off the Magic's win.

Albury Wodonga and Bulleen Inter could not be separated in a scoreless draw in Albury. Jim Wibskov was outstanding in goal for the northerners and Ben Menzies starred in the midfield.

Northern Division

Newcastle Breakers and the New South Wales Institute of Sport drew one-all at Topper Stadium on Friday.

There was some dispute about the Newcastle goal, some suggesting it was an own goal, but the referee credited it to Luke Knott. Shane Cansdell-Sheriff equalised for the Institute.

A Denis Jurjevic goal for Wollongong gave the Wolves a one-nil win at Suncorp Stadium over the Queensland Academy of Sport. It was as tight as the score suggests, though both sides felt they had created enough chances to ensure victory.

Michael Katz and Mathew Valeri scored for the ACT Academy at Seiffert Oval against Marconi. It was well into injury time before Chad Gibson nabbed a consolation goal for the visitors.

UTS Olympic Colts and Sydney United Colts drew two-all at Belmore. Ali Jomaa and Scott Baillie scored for Olympic and Mark Rudan knocked in a double for United.

Finally, Sydney United overcame Marconi Fairfield Colts by five goals to one. Azur Mujanovic scored two for United, and singles fell to Mario Jerman, Joel Griffiths and Daniel Kukucka.

The dangerous Mark Haggar grabbed his fourteenth of the season for the Colts team.

SOUTHERN DIVISION RESULTS

Bentleigh Greens	2	Heidelberg United	2
Papettas, Wilkinson		Papoutsis, Pasgas	
Melbourne Knights	2	South Melbourne	1
og, Bosevski		Kasikakis	
Sth Melb Rockets	2	Altona Magic	4
Manolitis, Yilmaz		Trpcevski 2, Cergovski, og	
Albury Wodonga	0	Bulleen Inter	0

Carlton,VIS and Gippsland Falcons all had byes.

NORTHERN DIVISION RESULTS

New. Breakers	1	NSWIS	1
Knott		Cansdell-Sherriff	
QAS	0	Wollongong City	1
		Jurjevic	
ACTAS	2	Marconi Fairfield	1
Katz, Valeri		Gibson	
UTS Oly Colts	2	Syd Utd Colts	2
Jomaa, Baillie		Rudan 2	
Marconi Colts	1	Sydney United	5
Haggar		Mujanovic 2, Jerman, Griffiths, Kukucka	

UTS Olympic and the AIS had byes.

SOUTHERN DIVISION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mel Knights	14	12	0	2	51	15	36
Carlton	11	10	0	1	25	5	30
G Falcons	12	8	2	2	23	11	26
V I S	12	6	3	3	30	15	21
Bulleen Inter	12	5	2	5	18	18	17
B Greens	13	4	2	7	14	26	14
Heidelberg	12	4	2	6	14	26	14
A Wodonga	12	3	1	8	14	18	10
Sth Melb	12	2	3	7	22	21	9
A Magic	11	2	2	7	16	32	8
Sth Mel Rockets	11	1	1	9	11	51	4

NORTHERN DIVISION TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
A I S	13	10	2	1	58	10	32
UTS Olympic	13	7	3	3	36	21	24
W'gong City	14	7	3	4	29	22	24
Q A S	14	6	4	4	32	18	22
Marconi F	14	6	2	6	23	27	20
A C T A S	14	5	4	5	18	38	19
Sydney Utd	13	4	6	3	35	26	18
Marconi Colts	13	5	2	6	19	31	17
Newcastle B	13	4	4	5	25	28	16
Syd Utd Colts	13	3	2	8	15	35	11
UTS Oly Colts	14	3	2	9	19	45	11
N S W I S	14	2	4	8	18	26	10

LEADING GOALSCORERS

Southern Division

Zoran Petrevski	VIS	12
Adis Kablar	Melbourne Knights	9
Jovanco Novacevski	Carlton	8
John Kalabric	Melbourne Knights	8
Festim Zekiri	Melbourne Knights	7

Northern Division

Mile Sterjovski	AIS/Sydney United	22
Mark Hagger	Marconi Fairfield Colts	14
Marc Bresciano	AIS	9
Tony Krslovic	Sydney United/Colts	8

Round 17 Fixtures

Southern Division

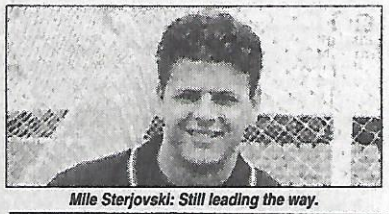
Sat 24 January
Heidelberg United v Bulleen Inter (4pm, Olympic Village)
Altona Magic v VIS (5.30pm, Paisley Park)

Sun 25 January
Gippsland Falcons v Bentleigh Greens (3.30pm, Falcons Park)
Carlton v Albury Wodonga (5.30pm, Optus Oval)
South Melbourne, Melbourne Knights and Bulleen Inter have byes.

Northern Division

Sat 24 January
N S W I S v UTS Olympic (5pm, Valentine Park)
UTS Olympic Colts v Newcastle Breakers (4pm, St George Stadium)

Sun 25 January
Wollongong City v Sydney United Colts (3.30pm, Brandon Park)
Marconi Fairfield Colts v ACTAS (5pm, Marconi Stadium)
Sydney United v A I S (4pm, Parramatta Stadium)
Marconi Fairfield and QAS have byes.



Mile Sterjovski: Still leading the way.

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ERICSSON CUP

Match Reports

STORMIN' NORM BLITZES SHARKS

SYDNEY OLYMPIC .....3 ADELAIDE SHARKS 0

By Stuart Jones

In a game of high drama at Belmore Oval on Sunday night, it was Sydney Olympic who came out on top of the Adelaide Sharks by a scoreline of three goals to nil.

Within seven minutes of the kick-off referee Eugene Brazzale pointed to the spot when Norman Tome was brought down in the penalty area by Alex Castro. Tome converted and over the next fifteen minutes he could have had a hat-trick if he taken the chances handed to him.

The Adelaide defence looked shell-shocked and stood still as ball after ball carved them up.

In the 38th minute a cracker of a shot came from Brett Emerton's boot from outside the box, was turned around the post by Nathan Wildy.

After the game Olympic coach Jeff Harcombe said if Tome had taken them all his chances he would have been leading goal scorer.

Meanwhile at the other end of the park, Olympic's Catlin had had to make less than a handful of saves, and about the only thing equal was the yellow card total (two each).

However whatever Adrian Santrac said at the break certainly turned the visitors around and after the interval they put themselves in scoring positions more often.

In the 65th minute Alex Castro had a chance to even the score, after beating Paul Carter and Elias Augerinos he chipped the advancing Bobby Catlin only to see the ball hit the bar and go over. It was to be the closest the Sharks came to scoring.

Five minutes later Augerinos cut off substitute Adrian Iandiorio from converting a Jim Tsekinis cross just eight metres from the goal.

A minute later further controversy struck this game as quickly as the lightning overhead. Norman Tome was chasing a through ball when Nathan Wildy grabbed the ball right on the goal line. Linesman Peter Miller flagged to the referee that Wildy had taken the ball outside the area and brought it back over.

Ref Brazzale then sent the keeper off and Paul Pezos went into goal for the second time in three games. From the free-kick Augerinos put it low into the corner, around the wall, and past the keeper into the back of the net.

With 10 men, and having played midweek, the visitors could not come back from this and the score was kept down thanks to Pezos saving twice in one on one situations with Norman Tome.

In the end though he could not keep out Brett Emerton who was put through on goal by Tome.

After the game Jeff Harcombe was happy to get the points but there were issues still to be addressed: "Really it was a game of missed chances, at half-time we should have been four up. It is important you are there for the chances however I would like to have put more of them away.

"The likes of Rastall and Carter did a good job out there tonight. However there are things that still disappoint me, like losing possession for nothing, you must have pride in your passing. Overall I am very pleased with that performance tonight."

As for opposition coach, Adrian Santrac, the loss of Wildy means he has no keepers in his squad. He also picked up more injuries from this game to add to a very long list already.

"The game changed with the send-off, we gifted them a penalty early, and our defence was disjointed in the first half, our guys stepped up a gear after the break and Castro and Tsekenis nearly scored.

"It was back to the walls stuff for our guys. We had two big games in a short period of time and some of our players were not able to come up."

All in all a great victory for the home side, keeping their finals hopes alive.

OLYMPIC: Catlin, Carter, Juric, Tome, Tsekenis, Emerton, Augerinos, Rastall, Barbalace, Bayhan (Kalantzis 55), Carle (Jomaa 66).

SHARKS: Wildy, Castro, Kuzmanovic, Milosevic (Iandiorio 29) (Iveira 81), Kokkinoplitis, Artone, Borghetto, Pezos, Da Silva, Tsekenis (Kollias 84), Miailidis.

SCORERS
Olympic: Tome 8, Augerinos 72, Emerton 92

POY
3 Augerinos (SO)
2 Tome (SO)
1 Tsekenis (SO)

TRIMMERS SAVES THE DAY

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS .....1 SOUTH MELBOURNE 1

By Dwyght Tuffnell

A Paul Trimboli penalty three minutes into stoppage time stole a point from a gutsy Melbourne Knights in what may have been the most dramatic match of the season.

Trimboli's last gasp equaliser came after the Knights had two players sent-off and keeper Joe Didulica sent to hospital. Even coach Ken Worden was ordered out of the dugout just to add to their problems!

It was a classic derby, high on incident and drama, typical of clashes between these two teams.

Worden went just after Ransford Banini was dismissed three minutes into the second half (Banini fouled Goran Lozanovski and was booked by referee Eddie Lennie).

Worden, who was seething with the performance of Lennie, said after the game that he urged the referee to "be fair, be fair", and was removed from the playing area.

"It's terribly disappointing that our club has to fight and fight under circumstances that don't seem fair," said Worden.

Shortly after Didulica had to be substituted, nearly collapsing through concussion. Earlier in the game Didulica took a blow to the face when a Lozanovski shot bobbled and struck him on the nose.

Worden said the he didn't look too good at half-time but decided to let him play on.

Eight minutes into the second half and Didulica was stretchered off and skipper Andrew Marth went in goal and proceeded to stop everything that South Melbourne could throw at him.

Then, after 66 minutes, the unthinkable happened — the Knights took the lead.

Marth had just made an important save at the feet of Vaughan Coveny and the ball was rushed upfield to Tom Pondeljak, he swung over a cross to the far post where ex-South player Ivan Kelic rose above the defence and beat Michael Petkovic with a powerful header into the corner.

Soon after Marth and the post denied South again. Lozanovski's low drive was palmed away by Marth only as far as Fausto De Amicis, whose header safely cannoned away off an upright.

Michael Curcija also struck the post after a scramble in the box with time running out.

The equaliser that wouldn't seem to come for South arrived from the spot in the 93rd minute.

A looping cross from George Goutzioulis was cleared off the line, Curcija was there to force the ball goalwards but had the effort cleared by the hand of Zeljko Susa.

Susa became the sixth Knights player sent-off this season and Trimboli calmly slotted the ball high into the net to undo all the good work Marth and his Knights team had done.

South coach Ange Postecoglou gave credit to Marth but said his side had played "silly" with the numerical advantage.

"We didn't play smart after they had the man sent-off and lost their keeper.

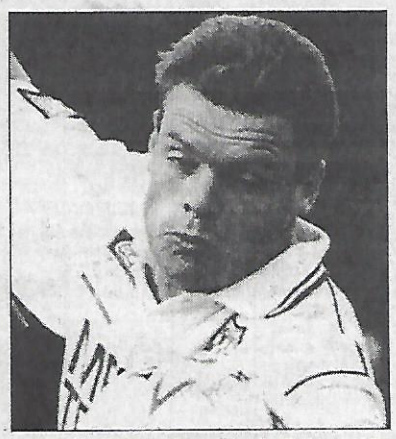
"They scored a good goal and in the end we were lucky to get away with a point because we didn't go about it the right way.

"We tried to find some silly ways to break through rather than sticking to our own game," Postecoglou lamented.

Worden felt his team deserved the three points and paid tribute to his side for their battling display.

"They were never going to break us down, in the end it was very unfair," ended a disappointed Worden.

What a Melbourne derby!



Andrew Marth: Stopped everything South threw at him ... as a keeper!

KNIGHTS: Joe Didulica (Markovski 54), Kovacevic, Jolic, Banini, Marth, Pondeljak, Kelic, Susa, Cerro, Deak, Nastevski (Kutlesovski 83).

SOUTH: Petkovic, Iosifidis, De Amicis, Blatsis, Clarkson (Goutzioulis 82), Panopoulos (Coveny 54), Trimboli, Curcija, Damianos, Lozanovski, Baser.

SCORERS:
Knights: Kelic 66
South: Trimboli 90p

CROWD: 8,000

POY
3 Marth (MK)
2 Kovacevic (MK)
1 De Amicis (SM)

KUPRESAK AGAIN UNITES SYDNEY

SYDNEY UNITED.....1 CARLTON 1

By John Economos

Velimir Kupresak, Sydney United's outstanding 34-year old central marker, greatly inspired his team's fightback last Sunday night at the Parramatta Stadium to earn a 1-1 draw against the Ericsson League's newcomers, Carlton.

The drizzling rain that fell upon the game did absolutely nothing to dampen the unyielding defensive qualities of the evergreen and heroic warrior Kupresak.

Not only did he well shackle Carlton's lethal left footed goal-ace John Markovski, yet Carlton was still a goal in front at the break, Kupresak took it once again upon himself to fix things up front as well, by scoring the urgently needed equaliser.

Carlton had bombarded United in the first session and could easily have gone in at the break with a couple of goals. Yet ironically it was Carlton that lined up with a more cautious back five whilst United played with a flat four defence.

But Kupresak, together with his twin centre-back partner Joe Vrkic plus goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac, the trio stood defiantly rock solid.

Carlton finally, and justifiably, opened the score five minutes before the break, engineered by that highly skilled right wingback, and, ironically, last year's United player, Robbie Trajkovski.

The highly skilled Trajkovski from the right touchline rifled a perfectly guided cross to the back post to hit unmarked Lubo Lapsansky, who gratefully powered his header into the target.

Seconds before the break, United should have 'balanced the books' at the other end when dynamic little Jason Culina zipped through on the right, to perfectly cross inside to the back stick, but goal-ace Abbas Saad unable to climb high enough, glanced his header away from the target, yet from point blank range.

As almost always, when United is ever in serious trouble, that man Kupresak was again on the scene to steer the ship back on course three minutes into the second session.

United's lanky skipper Paul Bilokapic swung a cross from the right, but despite the fact that Carlton midfielder Lubo Lapsansky valiantly tried to head the danger away, the competitive Kupresak came thundering in from behind to smash a vicious rocketting header that screamed into the top right angle of the target with Carlton's custodian Dean Anastasiadis fully airborne, yet stranded.

Carlton could have had a much earlier goal when pacey striker Andy Vlahos scooted clear to blast an angled left footer in the 10th minute which barely shaved the base of the far post.

The elusive Vlahos yet again peppered in another rocket in the 28th, this time with his right, but United's towering goalkeeper Zeljko Kalac pulled off a magnificent diving save that was nothing short of world class.

Eddie Krncevic, Carlton's coach reflected: "This was a two half game with us dominating I felt in the first where we were a little unlucky not to have scored a couple of goals. We shut them down in the first session but we dropped back too much in the second half.

"Mitch (United's coach) must have really yelled at them during the break. But at the end of the day I suppose it was a fair result."

Meanwhile United's boss, David Mitchell, quietly seemed to endorse the sentiments of Krncevic, stating: "We were overrun in the first half in the midfield.

Our goal kicks were not crossing the halfway mark because of the wind maybe. They had an extra man in the midfield but in the second half we fixed this. We then had a real go at them and could have scored more and won I felt."

PUMAS: Kalac, Barrett (Phillips 70), Kupresak, Vrkic, Munro, J.Culina, Hooker, Bilokapic, Burns, Saad, Sterjovski (Bosevski 62).
BLUES: Anastasiadis, Trajkovski, Douglas, Colosimo, Anthopoulos, Stergiopoulos (Allsopp 72), Grella (Della Rocca 80), Lapsansky (Bacak 78), Atkinson, Markovski, Vlahos.
SCORERS
United: Kupresak 48
Carlton: Lapsansky 40
CROWD: 3,533
POY
3 Kupresak (SU)
2 Trajkovski (C)
1 Kalac(SU)

ERICSSON CUP

Results Round Sixteen

Newcastle Breakers	1	Gippsland Falcons	5	Brisbane Strikers	2	Wollongong City	1
Canberra Cosmos	0	Marconi Fairfield	2	Melbourne Knights	1	South Melbourne	1
Adelaide City	0	Perth Glory	1	Sydney United	1	Carlton	1
UTS Olympic	3	Adelaide Sharks	0				

ERICSSON CUP TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sydney Utd	16	9	6	1	26	12	33
Sth Melbourne	16	8	6	2	38	23	30
Adelaide City	14	8	1	5	27	16	25
Perth Glory	16	7	4	5	20	21	25
Carlton	15	6	6	3	18	14	24
Melb Knights	15	6	5	4	21	17	23
Wollongong	15	7	1	7	32	17	22
Marconi Fairfield	16	6	4	6	17	21	22
Adelaide Sharks	14	6	2	6	22	22	20
UTS Olympic	16	6	3	7	19	27	21
Gippsland Falcons	16	5	5	6	15	18	20
Brisbane Strikers	16	5	0	11	13	23	15
Canberra Cosmos	16	2	6	8	19	34	12
Newcastle Breakers	16	1	5	10	15	35	8

ERICSSON CUP LEADING SCORERS

13 Pablo Cardozo	Adelaide Sharks
11 Damian Mori	Adelaide City
10 Scott Chipperfield	Wollongong
8 Abbas Saad	Sydney United
8 Norman Tome	UTS Olympic
7 Peter Buljan	Canberra Cosmos
7 Tom Pondeljak	Melbourne Knights
7 Paul Trimboli	Sth Melbourne
7 Brad Maloney	Marconi
6 Claytone Zane	Newcastle Breakers

Round Seventeen Fixtures

Odds courtesy of SportOdds

1.50	Carlton SC	3.65	Canberra Cosmos	6.50
2.00	Gippsland Falcons	3.25	UTS Olympic	3.20
1.60	Perth Glory	3.50	Brisbane Strikers	5.50
1.33	South Melbourne	4.00	Newcastle Breakers	8.00
1.80	Wollongong City	3.25	Melbourne Knights	3.10
2.45	Sydney United	3.25	Adelaide City	2.45
2.10	Adelaide Sharks	3.25	Marconi Fairfield	2.80

1998 WORLD CUP

Brazil	4.00
France	7.00
England	8.00
Germany	8.00
Holland	9.00
Italy	9.00
Argentina	13.00
Spain	16.00
Yugoslavia	23.00
Croatia	26.00
Nigeria	29.00
Romania	29.00
Denmark	34.00
Colombia	41.00
Norway	41.00
Bulgaria	51.00
Paraguay	51.00
Belgium	61.00
Austria	91.00
Cameroon	101.00
Chile	126.00
Mexico	126.00
Scotland	141.00
Morocco	151.00
Sth Africa	201.00
Sth Korea	201.00
USA	201.00
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Round 17 Preview

By Stuart Jones

Sydney United v Adelaide City

Last season this clash ended in a 1-1 draw. Of course in Round three the name of David Mitchell appeared on the scoresheet twice with no response from City, who will want to gain the points off United in Sydney as a reply to those lost at Norwood Oval. This is going to be a clear sign as to who will finish on top at season's end.

Prediction: Draw

Carlton v Canberra Cosmos

3-1 in Canberra earlier this year was in a period where the Blues were the unknown side and Canberra suffered from a poor start. This game will be a lot tougher with perhaps the home ground advantage giving it to Carlton.

Prediction: Carlton

SYDNEY UNITED SOCCER CLUB

Wollongong City v Melbourne Knights

The Knights are always tough, home or away. They travel to the 'Gong' having defeated Wolves by one goal earlier in the season. Mind you, last season City won this game 5-2 at home, a surprise result to many.

In the end Wolves missed out on the six whilst the Melbourne side just got there. With so many teams close around third to seventh spot, this is a 'crunch' game. City's home form is tremendous and they should be up for this one.

Prediction: Wollongong

Perth Glory v Brisbane Strikers

Perth's lack of goals in recent home matches must be concerning but someone will get a hiding once it all comes together.

Brisbane are still clinging to hopes of a finals position, although Frank Farina's optimism is not shared by many at all. Perth won this one earlier in the season 1-0. Last term the eventual champions won 2-0 in Perth.

Prediction: Perth

South Melbourne v Newcastle Breakers

Last season the odd goal separated these two teams, a 'so near yet so far' that is so reminiscent of the rest of the Breakers year.

Thanks to goals from Panopoulos and Trimboli, Souths got full points from this away fixture in Round three and are looking to repeat the dosage.

Prediction: South Melbourne.

Gippsland Falcons v UTS Olympic

Gippsland have been a fairly strong team this year, whilst Olympic's determination in the Marconi game recovering from the Canberra result has been just as resolute.

The Falcons are tough at home and UTS lost this fixture 3-0 last season.

The scoreline was replicated in Round three this term at the SFS although this time the Falcons were on the receiving end.

Prediction: Draw

Adelaide Sharks v Marconi Fairfield

Zoran Matic returns to a club that he had built up such a rivalry with thanks to his days with the Zebras.

The Sharks were victorious in this fixture last season by two goals to one, Marconi winning 2-0 in Fairfield in round three of this season's fixtures.

Prediction: Adelaide Sharks.

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ERICSSON CUP Match Reports

NAVEN GLORY'S INSPIRATION

ADELAIDE CITY .....0 PERTH GLORY.....1

By Val Migliaccio

Perth Glory came to Adelaide and conquered a lucklustre Adelaide City with a 1-0 victory at Hindmarsh Stadium.

Perth were far more committed and bottled up Adelaide City's free flowing style of play. The Glory had winners all over the park and the form of their back four, Tony Franken, Vinko Buljabasic, Gavin Wilkinson and Danny Hay gave absolutely no joy to the Zebras who lacked inspiration and imagination.

The Zebras, coming off a 1-1 draw with the Adelaide Sharks midweek, reshuffled their line-up for Perth with the club's second highest goalscorer Michael Brooks on the bench, with Brad Hassell coming in and Dino Mennillo dropped from the squad with Mark Yates filling the squad spot.

The Glory did not carry any passengers and coach Gary Marocchi must be happy with the way his side completely nullified the Zebras and the amount of chances they created.

The match was dominated by Perth's midfield play, with Gareth Naven, and Troy and Scott Halpin all having a say in proceedings, feeding the dangerous duo of Bobby Despotovski and Samson Siasia.

The first shot of the match was fired in the 12th minute when Zebras' Damian Mori combined with Milan Ivanovic, but the Socceroo striker shot wide.

In the 26th minute Ivanovic combined with Kris Trajanovski, who flicked the ball to Mori, with the final effort missing the target.

Right at the start of the first half Despotovski had a great opportunity to open the scoring when he was fed by Naven, but Zebra custodian Jason Petkovic pulled off a great stop.

Despotovski again showed the shape of things to come in the 70th minute when he was fed by Scott Millar with Petkovic again in the way.

Two minutes later a corner by Troy Halpin was fired to the near post and was punched by Petkovic but Siasia missed the target with a great half volley on the turn from 10 metres.

Naven split the Zebra defence in the 73rd minute and released Troy Halpin on the edge of the box, but his low shot missed the upright by centimetres.

Siasia almost scored an incredible goal in the 73rd minute when his overhead bicycle kick, which was goalbound, cannoned off the back of Zebra captain Alex Tobin.

Perth scored the winning goal in the 87th minute when Naven raced past three Zebras defenders and released Despotovski on the edge of the box who slotted the ball past the advancing Petkovic.

This spurred the Zebras into action but it was all too late and in the 88th minute Mori had a half chance to score from eight metres but was denied by the brilliance of Perth keeper Tony Franken.

Angelo Costanzo was pushed into the midfield late in the match and was unlucky not to equalise in the 90th minute when his goalbound header was deflected out for a corner.

Glory returned home with three points and must be confident for the match against Brisbane at home next week, while Adelaide City have some soul searching to do before they head to NSW for the meeting with top-placed Sydney United.

Gareth Naven: Top game for Glory.

GLORY: Franken, Wilkinson, Buljabasic, Naven, Miller, Despotovski, Garcia, Siasia, S. Halpin, Hay, T. Halpin.

ZEBRAS: Petkovic, Armour, Ivanovic, Tobin, Costanzo, Mori, Hassell, Gibson, Trajanovski (Brooks 59), Thomas (Yates 63), Sabljak (Dodd 83).

SCORER
Glory: Despotovski 87

CROWD: 4,600

POY
3 Naven (PG)
2 T. Halpin (PG)
1 Siasia (PG)

CHAMPIONS BACK ON TRACK?

BRISBANE STRIKERS .....2 WOLLONGONG WOLVES.....1

By Glenn Davis

The Strikers, who have had a disastrous season with 11 losses from their previous 14 games, finally had some luck go their way courtesy of an own goal, helping them to victory over form side Wollongong Wolves on Saturday night at Suncorp.

Robert Stanton's own goal was the decisive factor in the game, breaking a 1-1 half-time deadlock.

Both sides had chances to nail their opponents before Stanton watched in despair as the ball rebounded off his legs after Nick Meredith had his shot blocked by Wolves' keeper Adam Brodbeck — the ball trickling agonisingly into the net.

Nevertheless the Strikers rode their luck to finally win after a season where it has seemingly deserted them.

Andy Harper was not in the starting eleven, but Frank Farina is adamant the club's major off-season signing is still in his plans (see story on page two).

The Queenslanders got off to a dream start when midfielder Troy Cranney stunned the Wolves' defence with an early goal two minutes in, driving with pin-point accuracy low and hard from 20m out, after good shielding work by the unselfish Rod Brown.

Wolves' Matt Horsley levelled the scores in the 25th minute (his first goal of the season), with another rebound, this time off a Strikers defender, which fell perfectly for him to swivel and rifle a right foot shot past keeper Clint Bolton.

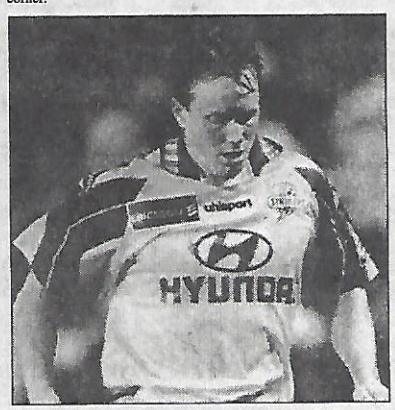
Wollongong's Olyroo substitute, Noel Spencer, blasted a chance just over the crossbar three minutes after the resumption, and Alvin Ceccoli's left foot strike sailed just wide of the mark as the visitors made a concerted effort for the three points.

However Nick Meredith, one of Brisbane's standout players along with captain Glen Gwynne, had a dipping 25 metre shot strike the crossbar in the 60th minute, before Stanton's moment of bad luck gave the Strikers the winner in the 67th minute.

Farina was delighted with the home side's victory and rated the fifth placed Wolves as one of the league's form sides. "We were playing a team in form and which had come off some big wins recently, while we've been out of form for too long," he said.

"Still we can't get carried away with it as we've got a long battle ahead."

Could the tide finally have turned for the Queensland lads?



Troy Cranney: Opened the scoring for the Strikers in just the second minute.

STRIKERS: Bolton, Gwynne, Bell, Zoricich, Meredith, Farina, Brown, Wehrman (Hews 55), T. Cranney, Laybutt, Blackford (S. Cranney 82)

WOLVES: Brodbeck, Ceccoli, Stanton, Horsley, Sevin (Spencer 17), Surjan, Chipperfield, Souris, Perinich, Huxley, Masi (Dimoski 70)

SCORERS
Strikers: T. Cranney 2, Stanton 67og
Wolves: Horsley 25

CROWD: 3,383

POY
3 Gwynne (BS)
2 Meredith (BS)
1 Horsley (WC)

JOE TOO TRICKY FOR BREAKERS

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS .....1 GIPPSLAND FALCONS 5

By Dane Skafte and Aidan Ormond

After their disappointing loss at home last week, Gippsland Falcons returned to form in devastating style beating Newcastle Breakers 5-1 at Topper stadium last Friday night. In doing so, the plucky Falcons have kept their top six hopes alive, while the Breakers remain firmly on the bottom of the league.

The star of the evening was pint-sized striker Joe Tricarico (given a start ahead of star striker Archie Thompson), who nabbed a double for Gipplsland and caused the Breakers' defence all sorts of problems. On the other hand Newcastle desperately missed their lanky striker Clayton Zane.

Mark Foy, one of Falcons's unsung heroes, began the demolition job after only four minutes, beautifully curling a left foot effort past Brad Swancott.

However it could have been 1-1 shortly after, when former Bristol City player Shaun Edwards' shot was touched over by Bojo Jevdjevic (filling in for Jimmy Kourtis in goals for Falcons).

Gippsland made it two after the skilful Joe Tricarico provided the 2,888 crowd with a little magic — running from nearly the halfway line to score a brilliant solo effort.

Newcastle's problems were compounded when Matty Lowe was given a red card for a bad tackle just before half-time.

The Falcons simply dominated the game thereafter with Tricarico making it three in the 62nd minute, his power strike coming after his great run and cut in from the right, and Nick Tsaltas, two minutes later, smashed an unstoppable drive from 20 metres for 4-0 to the Victorians.

Courageous Breakers skipper, Shane Pryce, regained some pride by converting a penalty after a hand ball in the 70th minute.

Nevertheless, 'Arok's Wonders' had the final say with ex-Collingwood midfielder Brian MacNicol, a late sub, scoring from 15 metres out with three minutes to go.

The match proved that this season the Falcons have learnt the hard lessons of the past, and are able to dominate sides lower down the ladder as well as shock those above them.

Hopefully this will also be the case for the underachieving Breakers who, after conceding 12 goals in their last three games, desperately need to improve in this area. They play South Melbourne this week.

Shane Pryce: Salvaged some pride for the Breakers with a late goal from a penalty.

BREAKERS: Swancott, Sprod, Austin, Pryce, McManus, Ironside, Ritchie, Wilson, Edwards, Lowe, Lane (Bennett 56).

FALCONS: Jevdjevic, Bell, Gotis, Palamaras, Sekulic, Tsaltas (MacNicol 67), Foy (Marcina 66), Tricarico, Osman, Hastie, Mihajlovic

SCORERS
Breakers: Pryce 70p
Falcons: Foy 4, Tricarico 41,62, Tsaltas 65, MacNicol 87

CROWD: 2,888

POY
3 Tricarico (GF)
2 Mihajlovic (GF)
1 Swancott (NB)

ERICSSON CUP

Match Reports

MARCONI WINS IN HEAT

CANBERRA COSMOS.....0 MARCONI FAIRFIELD.....2

By Nick Guoth

Marconi Stallions repeated their first round victory with a 2-0 win, courtesy of two goals in five minutes late in the first half at Seiffert Oval on Saturday.

Both teams suffered badly in the heat and the play was almost at walking pace during many stages, leading to the question, why are games being played at such an early time of the day in summer?

The Cosmos, with a re-organised defence through injuries, were unable to cope early on. Francis Awaritefe had an excellent opportunity to open the scoring after beating the off-side trap, but he was unable to capitalise, with Tony Giannasca pulling off a good save.

Then after half an hour, Marconi captain Brad Maloney, who scored in the first round as well, was given too much space, had time to look up and smash his rocket shot easily past Giannasca.

Canberra suffered another blow to their defence when strong defender Andy Roberts left the field injured. And a few minutes later Giannasca failed to judge the flight of a corner and stood helpless at the far post as the ball was headed back across goal for Dominic Longo to put away the chance from close range.

The second half saw Marconi try to defend their lead and chances became rare.

Luke Casserly should have done better but for a crucial block from the Cosmos keeper, and Canberra could only summon a few shots at goal, the best falling to Ante Moric, whose attempt was acrobatically palmed away by Ante Covic.

Cosmos coach Branko Culina was disappointed with the result, having seen his team gain in maturity over the last months. "I thought we were on the right track," he said. Both coaches agreed that the heat didn't suit their players.

Dominic Longo: Scored the second goal just before half time to seal the win for Marconi.

COSMOS: Giannasca, Roberts (Wilson 33), Zelic, Ravanello, Moric, Hunter, Kelly (Musitano 40), James, Buljan, Haythornthwaite, Morgan (Prenzoski 62).

MARCONI: Covic, Babic, Ansaldi (Care 21) (Souris 66), Longo, Casserly, Maloney, Awaritefe, Renaud, Kim, Zoric, Mendez (Tomich 83).

SCORERS
Marconi: Maloney 32, Longo 36

CROWD: 3,547

POY
3 Maloney (MF)
2 Kim (MF)
1 Musitano (CC)

WILDY SAVES DAY FOR SHARKS

ADELAIDE SHARKS .....1 ADELAIDE CITY.....1

By Val Migliaccio

A record season crowd of 10,056 saw the 38th Adelaide league derby end in a 1-1 draw at Hindmarsh stadium on Wednesday last week, in the deferred Round 11 match.

If Mori and Cardozo were the expected stars of the show, it was the supporting cast in each side that took the spotlight, with City's Brooks and the Sharks' Day scoring for their respective sides, on a night when Angelo Costanzo shone in the City midfield and the youthful Nathan Wildy was brilliant in goal for the Sharks.

Sharks coach Adrian Santrac introduced Alex Kuzmanovic and Branko Milosevic, while for the Zebras the strong running Michael Brooks was in ahead of Bradley Hassell.

The opening minutes saw the Zebras pressing hard with Damian Mori testing Wildy with a blistering drive in the third minute.

And in the tenth minute Michael Brooks found an opening on the left and chipped the ball for Scott Thomas but once again the Sharks keeper was up to it, saving bravely.

The opening goal was a disaster for the skilful Shark Nathan Day, who headed the ball into the path of Michael Brooks, who was in the right spot to open the scoring for the Zebras after only 13 minutes.

Wildy once again saved the Sharks, this time, from a super shot by Angelo Costanzo in the 31st minute, and shortly after City's Mori was denied by some resolute defending from the Sharks' Con Kokkinoplitis.

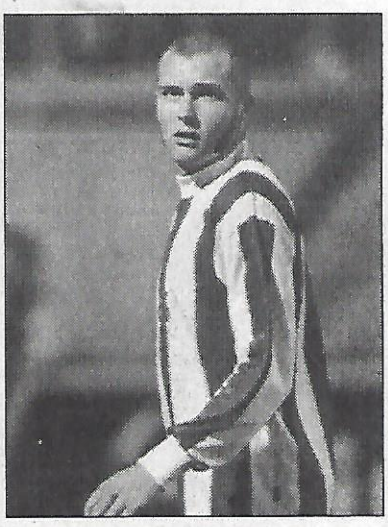
The second half started in sensational fashion with the departing Pablo Cardozo's (he is off the Austria's Rapid Vienna) chip just missing the upright, and the move of the match in the 51st minute resulted in Angelo Costanzo's diving header solidly stopped by that man again ... Nathan Wildy.

Finally the Sharks equalised and it was Nathan Day who attoned for his earlier error by miscuing his shot and the ball luckily went in under Jason Petkovic.

It could have been 2-1 to the Sharks had Corey Artone, in a Man of the Match performance, had not seen his free kick beat Jason Petkovic, hit the post and bounce back onto the other post and then right back in to the grateful hands of the Socceroo keeper!

Milan Ivanovic said later that the backlog of games (this was the Zebras' fifth game in 16 days) may have started to take its toll on the City boys.

Meanwhile, Pablo Cardozo was given a rousing farewell by the Sharks fans.



Nathan Day: On target again.

ZEBRAS: Petkovic, Armour, Ivanovic, Tobin, Costanzo, Mori, Mennillo (Sabljak 73), Gibson, Trajanovski, Brooks (Hassell 65), Thomas (Dodd 85)

SHARKS: Wildy, Castro, Kuzmanovic, Milosevic (Bigu 80), Kokkinoplitis, Artone, Day (Oliveira 82), Cardozo, Pezos, Tsekinis (Borghetto 72), Misialidis.

SCORERS
Zebras: Brooks 13
Sharks: Day 59

CROWD: 10,056

POY
3 Artone (AS)
2 Costanzo (AC)
1 Wildy (AS)

What Of Plans?

Dear Sir

I think Soccer Australia needs to inform the public as to its short and long-term plans for the game. The senior executives need a forum to be able to explain what the governing body in Australia is trying to achieve. They need to inform the public of the current agenda issues, the progress of these issues and also to be able to explain the facts accurately.

My suggestion is that just as Les Murray has a weekly column in your paper it would be good if you could offer Stephan Kamasz a weekly column to write on what is happening within Soccer Australia and the plans and vision are explained.

I also think 'On the Ball' should have a regular on their TV spot.

Take the recent Nick Tana interview on a Monday night, I think it would have been good to have a reply from Soccer Australia on what their thoughts were on the outcome of the workshop held by the clubs.

It would have been even better if Les had asked what were some of the recommendations to come out of the workshop.

Eg. current issues:

° The present pay dispute

° Entry of new teams to Ericsson Cup

° Access to competitions in Asia

° TV rights for local Soccer

° Comments on Johnny Warren's suggestion for a team in the Ericsson Cup from Singapore.

Wayne Jackson and Ian Collins (AFL) appear on Melbourne radio in regular time slots and the interest from the public is always high.

Furthermore, I think the public appreciates their comments on matters and also like being able to ask questions to the people running the game. I must stress that the public doesn't always agree but the interest is high and it rates well. Okay, soccer's executives are probably not going to get radio airplay but I think your paper would be an appropriate forum as a starting point.

Also I think it is important for administrators in the game to become better known within soccer circles as well as outside. I am involved in a local soccer club and I am sure more of members and players know who Wayne Jackson and Ian Collins are, but I bet they don't know as many soccer administrators.

I would be very interested to know what your thoughts are on my suggestion and would appreciate a reply .

Furthermore I would like to make a comment regarding the game summaries. I think it would be good to devote less space to this and try and devote more to clubs to promote their upcoming games and gossip within the clubs.

I suppose what I am saying, devote more space to Around the Clubs and have all clubs participating on a weekly basis.

Chris Attard, email letter.

Letter Cont'd

Editor's note:

Around the Clubs: We are desperately trying to include more in this section. Please stay tuned for further developments. Soccer Australia: Like all readers, have the right of reply but it's entirely up to officialdom. Match coverage: This is the ONLY paper of its kind in Australia. Not only will ALL match reports remain, we are looking to increase coverage of Australian soccer, this is the AUSTRALIAN & British Soccer Weekly after all. ABSW & SBS are the only way you can find out about the local scene on any regular basis. We mentioned 'changes' just before Christmas, they may be here sooner than you think.....?

MANLY WARRINGAH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

STATE LEAGUE

FIRST DIVISION

Manly Warringah Dolphins

REQUIRES PLAYERS FOR ITS
UNDER 18 AND UNDER 21 TEAMS
1998 SEASON.
TRAINING: TUESDAY AND THURSDAY
PASSMORE OVAL, MANLY VALE, 6.00PM SHARP
OR CONTACT THE REPRESENTATIVE SECRETARY
MARK CHANNELL
9923 1544 (B) 9944 0220 (H)

Newcastle Breakers

Clayton Zane began his soccer when playing for Plattsburg Merrylands until the U/12s. He was then picked up by Austral Newcastle, where he played his junior football. Zane's next step was the NSW State Super League, where he wore the colours of Adamstown Rosebuds, and it was there that John Kosmina saw him play while in charge of the Warringah Dolphins. Zane owes much to the coaches from his youth days, including Neville Power.

Clayton later returned to Newcastle, where his rise to the first team was fast; he spent a season in the U/18s and half a season in the U/21s before debuting in the Breakers first team.

For a player so young to shoot through the ranks shows he must have the talent, but there is still a lot to learn about playing football, and this is the same for Zane: "It was a huge step up from the State League to the NSL. I had a heap to learn. I have gained a lot from listening to John Kosmina, he has taught me about running off the ball and how to set up others on the field. I am not the sort of player who will bag 25 goals a season but I will score my fair share and hopefully set up more scoring opportunities for the team. So far this season I have scored last year's tally by the half way point, and I want to add to that, I really need to."

For a young player he has a lot of responsibility in the Breakers side, and some are incapable of handling it, however, Zane seems to take it all well. "Being at a club like Newcastle I get extra responsibilities. I may get lost in a crowd of players at another club but here I feel needed and there are expectations placed on me that maybe I would not get elsewhere. I want these extra expectations to inspire me upwards.

"Newcastle is a happy club. OK, it is tough not picking up the results, but we have to work at it, not give up. Everyone talks of the KB days but they are gone now. Hopefully we will start to win once more and those fans will come back to the game, they are still out there. Even while we lose the crowds are big and give us a great lift in every game. Newcastle people support their teams 100%."

As for international representation, he recently made the Olyroo squad, a terrific honour for the youngster.

"After missing out on the World Youth Championships I was disappointed but knew my chance would come further down the track. This has now eventuated and I will take it with both hands. My aim would be the starting line-up but with the lads coming from overseas, if they do, I might find it tough to get in. Given an equal opportunity though, I really think I can make it."

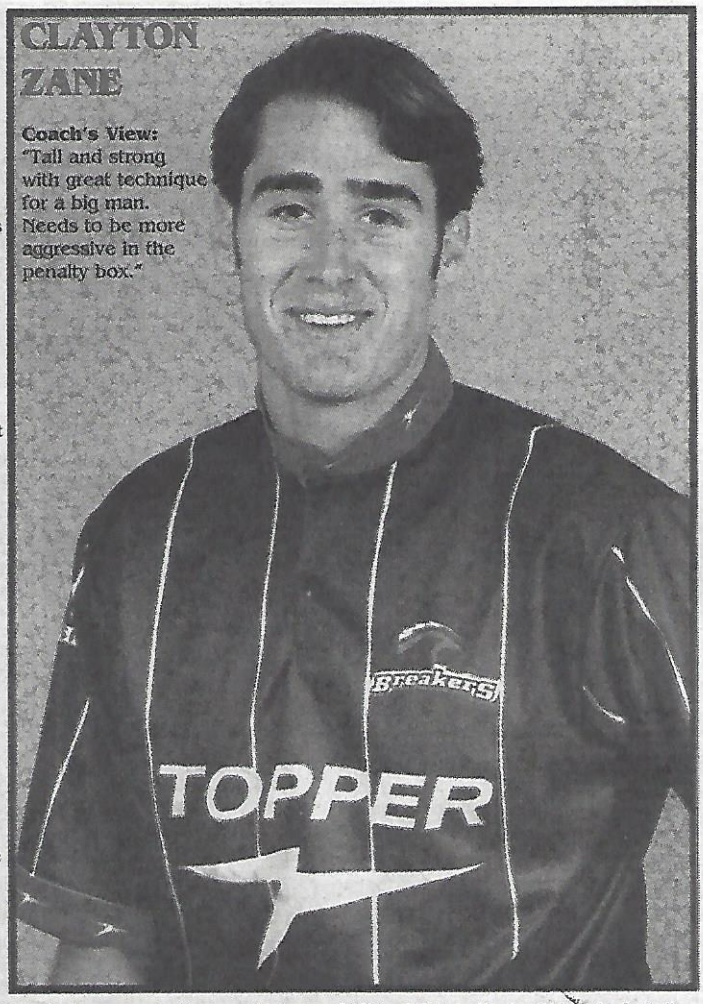
There are also other youngsters at the club that have impressed, but for Zane, Brad Swancott stands out as a player who will develop even further into a very good player. "He made the last Olyroo tour but missed out this time unfortunately, he is a player who could be going places."

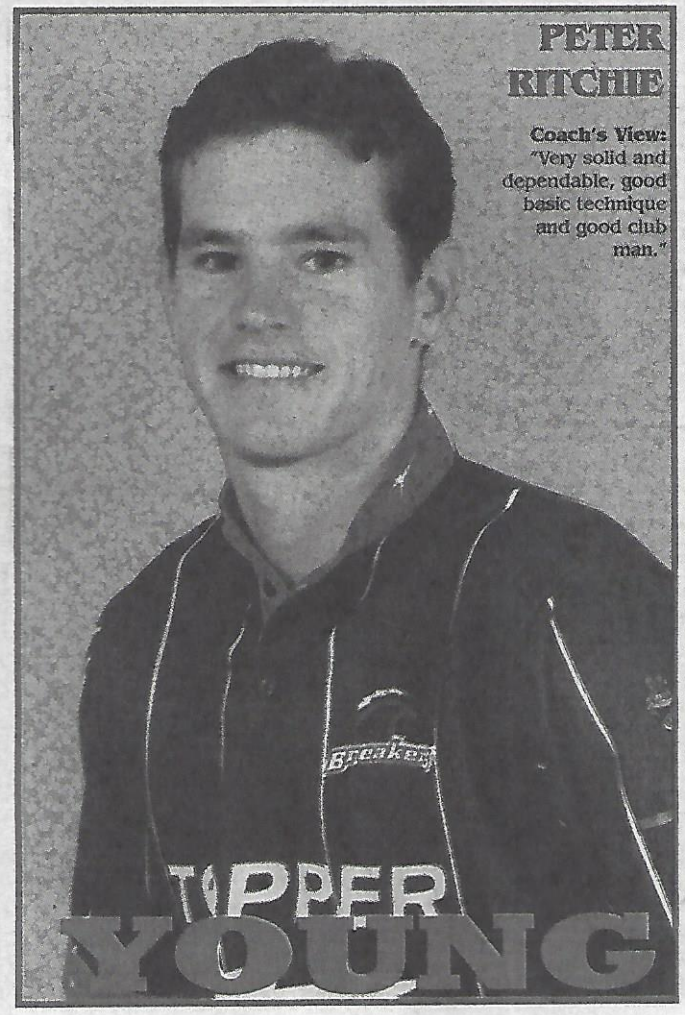
The international appeal of soccer means that players like Clayton Zane can go and prove their skills on the world stage and this is one thing he wants to do: "I would like to go to Belgium or Holland or the like and play for a team over there. I am thinking of trialling over there in six months or so, it would be great to live the life and play soccer at the same time.

"It is always going to be tough for clubs like Newcastle Breakers to hold onto the players who are making a good name for themselves, however, it is very important that they be rewarded for looking after me, in terms of a nice transfer fee that can go back into this club. That means so much to me."

A European contract and Australian representation does not seem an unrealistic dream. Hopefully in the future Clayton Zane will be able to reward Newcastle for all the help they have given him.

"When I look back over my career I hope people will say of me that I went as far as I could overseas and in Australia, I made a good living from the game, and, above all else, I enjoyed myself along the way."





Peter Ritchie grew up in Albury, on the border of NSW and Victoria. He played his junior football for St Patricks Albury for ten years. It was a fairly successful side, as was Ritchie, in his role as defender. For a country lad, the next step was the Riverina regional side and this was accomplished before progressing to the NSW country side, with whom he played in the U/14s and U/15s.

Ritchie also played in the nationals and was spotted by Ron Smith who invited him up to the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra. His AIS class included the likes of Hayden Foxe and Lucas Neill. Through most of this time Ritchie played in defence, mainly at right back, but unlike most of his AIS class, once he neared the end of his AIS spell he did not have a club to go to. Not for long though as Ron Smith talked to John Kosmina about this young defender. Newcastle was a long way from home in Albury, although his two years in Canberra had prepared him for life on the Soccer road.

These days he gets back home once or twice a year, and after a couple of weeks there runs out of things to do! In fact Newcastle is just like home now, but Peter had to settle in quickly. Within two days of coming up to the Breakers, the side had to play Brisbane in the Johnnie Walker Cup: "There was an injury crisis at the club and another player went down with the chicken pox the day before the game and all of a sudden I was in the side. In the end I played 15 first team games straight."

He soon learnt that the coach could see him not just in a defensive role. "John (Kosmina) told me I had the vision to play in the midfield and that I could be a hard tackling midfielder, a sort of Paul Ince role. I am not scared of tackling and hope I am as hard a player in the midfield as in the defence."

Nevertheless he does not mind attacking these days: "I look up to players like Eric Cantona. I enjoy attacking, I think most players would, I even scored my first goal the other week at home to Olympic."

Coming from the AIS to Newcastle has seen him adapt, with the Breakers less successful than his AIS team: "It is hard for a club like this but they really do their best. Last season we had a small squad so it was sometimes a case of if you are fit you can play. That is always hard because players are not scared of losing their first team place. This season it has been better in that regard and also for the fact that six of us are now full-time players. It means we train twice a day and I really feel all our games have improved. John Kosmina has been great, he is a big motivator and tries to build that 'hard man' approach into all of us. He also lets us play, which is always great for a player. John has done really well with the young guys, he has been good for the club and for the people of Newcastle. I am happy here, the club is not too big but it still has everything. I have enjoyed it up here even if we have not enjoyed the success I'm sure we can achieve."

Outside the game this country lad has learnt the other delights of Newcastle: "I love going to the beach and relaxing there. There are a few of the guys who enjoy a round of golf and I will be a part of that usually. Between training sessions we sometimes go to cafes and the like so that is all enjoyable. I am not a great watcher of sport, I would much rather be involved in it. Soccer was a choice I made when I was young and so far it has been the right one."

Peter Ritchie has just signed a new two year deal with the Breakers: "I feel I am contributing much more these days but I would not mind scoring a few more times and being noticed. The best parts of my game, I feel, are my vision, passing game, switching the point of attack in midfield, and slowing play down. I win a lot of tackles in midfield as well, thanks to my days as a defender."

As for the future? "In a couple of years I would be looking at being offered contracts from Australia and overseas, to be that good would be brilliant. England is hard to get to these days, perhaps Belgium or Holland would be a more realistic aim. In terms of the national side, I was disappointed not to make the Olympic squad, I have been to a couple of camps previously. Despite Newcastle losing more game than they are winning, I am being seen here and contribute more than perhaps at other clubs."

At least by being seen more he is under the continual NSL spotlight. His chance will come again soon, and as for looking back on his career: "I would like to think I could look back on my career and know I have been involved in a very successful team, either here or overseas. I would love to play for my country, and I would not mind saying I played in midfield, looking to attack."

The country lad who took on the football world and won, not a bad ring to it.

YOUNG GUNS

Newcastle Breakers

Shaun Edwards was born in Portsmouth, England on December 18, 1978. By the age of four his family ad moved to Manchester, where his entire family became United supporters. This is where Edwards' love any team in a red shirt began, and his hatred of any eleven in blue!

When coming to Australia, his first team was Sydney City, albeit for their U/8 side, before moving onto anterbury prior to his family moving again, this time to Newcastle. There Edwards played for Ellebane alentine and Highfields Azzuri before he left for Bristol City.

"In my younger days I actually played as a striker and scored heaps of goals. By the time I reached Bristol had moved back," he states.

It was at City where he was taken on as a YTS program player, part of his duties included cleaning the oots of none other than Paul Agostino (who was often mistaken for Shaun and vice versa), and David Seal.

"It was difficult to make the first team at the Robins. They had 26 professional players and many of the ds had a hard time breaking through. I was lucky enough to play in the Reserves quite a bit and played gainst some great players.

"My favourite opponent was the current player/manager of Swindon Town, the former Liverpool great eve McMahon.

"In training I used to have to mark Paul Agostino, so I always gave him a hard time.

"Joe Jordan was our manager and, overall, he was brilliant, hard and strict but fair, and Keith Mincher as our coach and he was just magnificent. Formerly, he was the coach in charge of Leeds United and heffield United's youth teams. The other 'overseas' lads really helped me out in my two seasons at Bristol ity.

"There were times when I got homesick but by sticking together, I got over it."

Alas, all good things come to an end and like so many other young lads across the nation, the option was ot taken up for him to gain a full-time professional contract: "In the end, the only one of us lads who got a ontract was Tommy Docherty (not the former Man Utd manager, I'm not that old!). He should go on and ay in the Premiership.

"Meanwhile, Cardiff City came in for me and so I went there for a couple of weeks, but it was a pretty oring place. I lasted two weeks, after all, they do play in blue."

It must have been good for Edwards that Bristol City actually play in red, and their most bitter rivals, istol Rovers, also play in blue!

Edwards returned home to Australia unsure if he ever wanted to play again, however, John Kosmina rang m up and, after thinking about it for a while, Shaun decided to give it another go and play for the eakers. "I motivated myself to play again and I certainly have the desire back. Of course, football in ustralia is different. The heat means the pace is slower for one thing, and there is a lot more passion ound the English scene.

"I am also playing out on the left which I am not used to either. The lifestyle out here is much better than the UK although I do miss the Spice Girls!"

He is currently looking for employment within the sports industry in the Newcastle area and would be an sset to any firm that employed him. Playing for a side that has not been winning does not help. "The ardest thing about playing here is that we all hate losing. Losing becomes a habit and we need to break is one and fast! It is always painful to lose and coming home from our recent trip to Adelaide, the bus as in total silence. Losing is horrible!

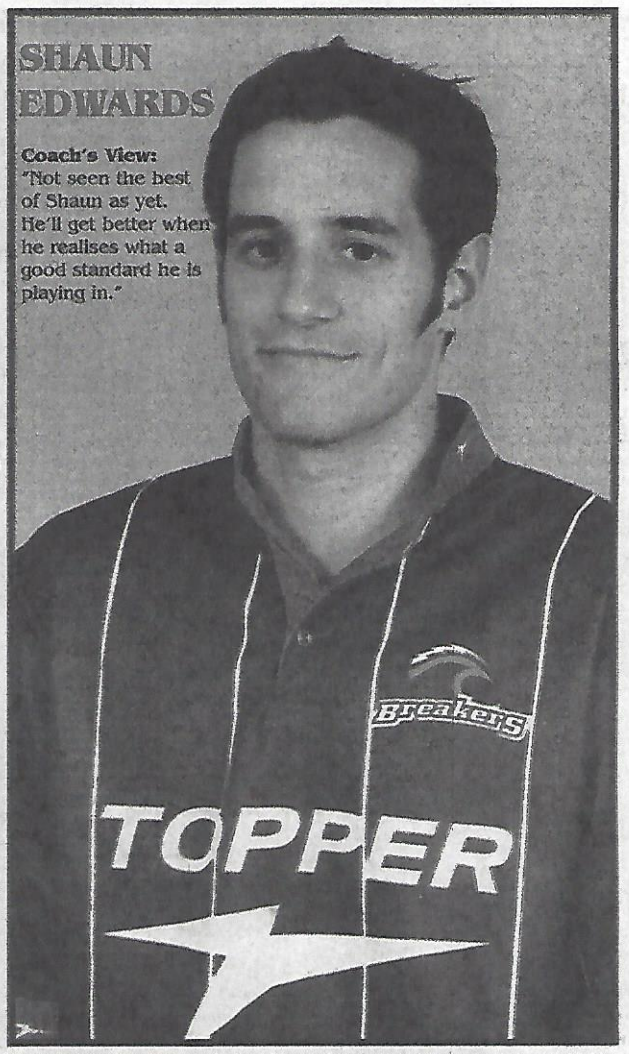
"We have the class to turn things around though, and my aim is to help the team into a mid-table osition this season.

"We are under pressure at Newcastle and I do not know about previous seasons here, but there are lads the youth team who could take our place in the side these days."

Eventually Edwards would like to return to playing overseas but for now wants to pay Newcastle back for utting their faith in him, and he believes many of the other players would want to do the same. "We owe it the club as they have been loyal to us."

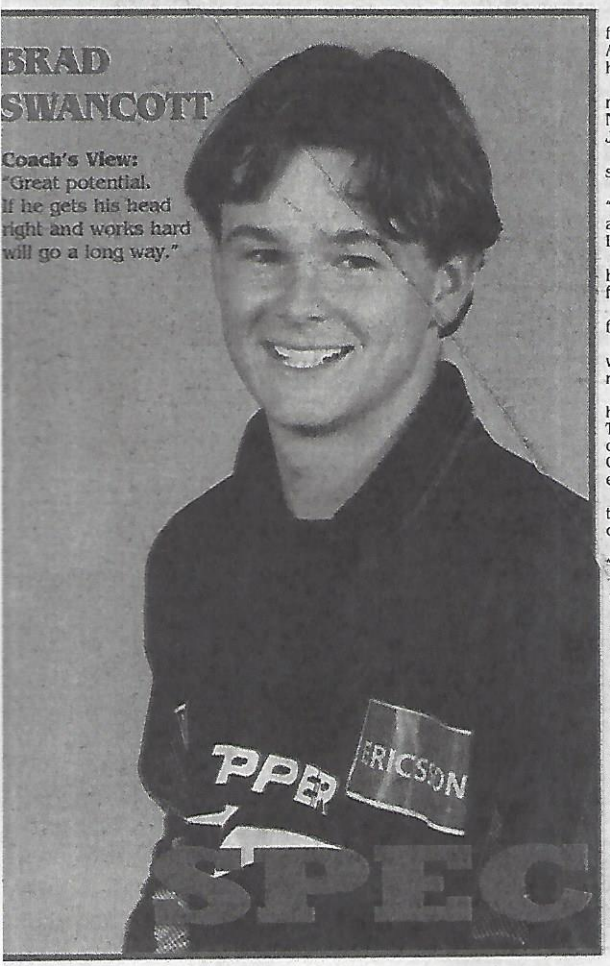
He would warn others against going overseas at a young age: "While I would not take back any of the xperiences I have had, I would not recommend it to the other 16 year olds. Things change of course, hen you get back you cannot go back to where you came from. You're lonely overseas and those at the ub will see you as coming in to take their positions and will give you a hard time. "It is tough and it's not l glory."

For the future, Shaun Edwards hopes he will play for his country and, when he finally hangs up his boots, e would like others to say of him: "He was a good ambassador for the game, and for Newcastle Breakers."



SHAUN EDWARDS

Coach's View:
"Not seen the best of Shaun as yet. He'll get better when he realises what a good standard he is playing in."



BRAD SWANCOTT

Coach's View:
"Great potential. If he gets his head right and works hard will go a long way."

This is the story of the local boy who 'done good'. Brad Swancott started playing as a goalkeeper with his first team, South Wallsend, contrary to the original Wallsend in Newcastle, UK, which has seen the likes of Alan Shearer and Peter Beardsley come through the ranks — young Swancott would be hoping to be even half as successful as them.

His next club was Adamstown Rosebuds, where he played U/15 football through to the Reserve team. His representative career, to date, includes playing for the Hunter side which remained undefeated, and the Northern NSW U/13 through to U/16s. He also played his part in the NSW U/20 side and was included in the Joeys train-on squad and a part of the previous Olyroo training camp.

In playing for NNSW, he actually played against present coach John Kosmina, who must have seen something in the lad as he invited him to join Newcastle Breakers.

"There are a lot of people who have helped me along the way to where I am now," states Swancott. "Trevor Morris was my first goalkeeper coach and Clint Gosling helps me tremendously. My father has always been a great help, he never forced me into one sport but encouraged me to do what I was good at." In fact, his father had played Rugby League for Western Suburbs lower grade sides.

Now, in his third season with the Breakers, Swancott has become a part of the first team set-up. He made his debut last season in Breakers' 1-2 loss to Melbourne Knights but this year has seen him have to battle for his spot with Liam Baker.

"It is always good to have a competitor for your position but, in the end, my greatest competition comes from myself," he says.

"I am always trying to prove to myself that I can do even better. I have always wanted to play soccer and what I have achieved so far has come from hard work and ability. I'm a very competitive person and maintaining my position in the side is the main motivation at present."

Keeping his first team spot has not been easy this year, but with an attitude like the one displayed above, he should easily overcome any obstacles in his way, including not being the tallest goalkeeper in the NSL. Thankfully, he has other attributes and skills to compensate for that: "I am good with my positioning and can read a game well, which helps. My reflexes are good too, and I tend to be fairly vocal on the field. Goalkeeping is a tough occupation. One mistake and the opposition usually score, there is little room for error, but I love keeping goal and would not play anywhere else."

Away from the sport, Swancott was an excellent cricketer but chose soccer as his main sport because of the chances within the sport for representative competition. He also enjoys surfing and taking time out in cafes with Clayton Zane.

These days, he is a full-time professional soccer player and is enjoying this period with the Breakers: "John Kosmina has given me, and the other younger players, an opportunity to play more often than we probably would at other clubs. At present, it is hard to know we are playing well but not getting the results or points. Perhaps we are not concentrating for the full 90 minutes but we will get better," Swancott said.

He continued: "I am sure if we have one or two more seasons that we will be right up there and as for my aims right now they are to consolidate my position in the team and next year, perhaps, look to make the Australian U/20 side and then competing in the 2000 Olympics with the Olyroos.

"At the moment I am very happy with Newcastle but eventually, like most others, I would like to play overseas," he concludes.

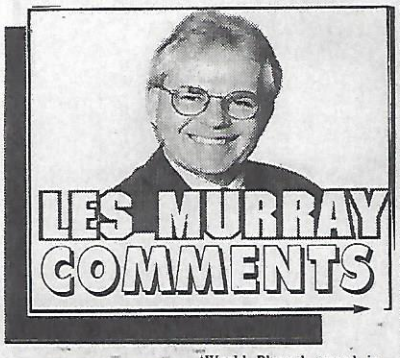
Brad's future certainly looks bright and his competitive spirit will have to come to the fore as he fights for a national team berth, but there can be no doubts that he is definitely 'up for it'.

Being a vocal sort who keeps his defenders motivated with a few verbal 'rockets' here and there, he could also one day be passed the captain's armband, a prospect he would relish and gleefully accept.

When asked how he would want to look back when finally hanging up the boots, he reflects: "I would like to say I was consistent and had a big influence on the team. I would hate for people to think I tried hard but failed."

SPECIAL 2

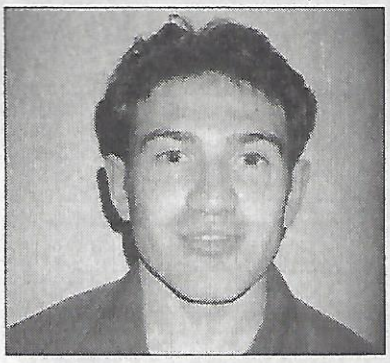
By Stuart Jones



Two major player awards handed out last week deserve our attention and analysis. Ronaldo, with a record majority, was voted FIFA 'World Player of the Year' for the second successive time. Mark Bosnich became the Oceania 'Player of the Year'.

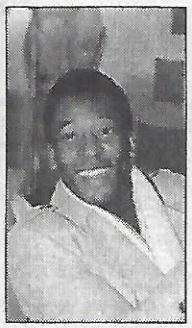
There is an important difference to consider between the two awards. The 'World Player' award is judged by some 120 national coaches who have to nominate, in order, their top three choices. The Oceania award, much like the European Player of the Year (also won by Ronaldo) is chosen by a panel of journalists in the Oceania region.

Bosnich first. His victory is hardly disputable although some would say that New Caledonia's Christian Karembou, now playing for an elite club as Real Madrid, may have rightfully won it ahead of him. But, quite apart from his performances for his club Aston Villa, Bosnich's feats in the international arena were the achievements that made his award deserving. In crunch, pressure games, Bosnich repeatedly excelled and kept his team alive. In Tehran, in that stirring 1-1 draw, he kept us in the World Cup. In the return game in Melbourne, where he was hardly a busy man, Bosnich was not to blame for either Iranian goal, escorted in by the mere gaze of our bemused and befuddled defenders. And Bosnich's abject heroics in the Confederations Cup, surely, also helped to guarantee his award.


Stan Lazaridis: Voted joint second in the Oceania players' award.

What of Ronaldo, who carried the votes of some 80 per cent of judges. How good is he? Pretty good. Certainly the best we have in the current era. Tall, physically imposing, he is also lythe and beautfully balanced. Glorious control with either foot, not a small brain, he can create as well as finish. And his finishing, pouncing on a chance with the hunger and short-term velocity of a jungle cat, is unmatched, probably by anybody in history.

At 21 Ronaldo promises a mind boggling future but already comparisons are surfacing with the legends of the past: Pele, Cruyff, Eusebio, Maradona etc. In my view too early to tell. The young Brazilian has achieved much already. His rate of scoring at club level is higher than Pele's or any of the above. His earning capacity is certainly unmatched by anyone who has preceded him. But there's one thing missing. He has not yet played in a World Cup, unlike the four legends I have mentioned, all of whom have had conquering World Cup campaigns.


Pelé: Arguably the world's greatest ever player.

Ronaldo was a squad member for Brazil in USA '94 but never got a game. This year's World Cup, in France, will be his first, when he will lead the most feared attack in world football, in the most cruelly demanding arena of all, under the pressure of the highest of expectations.

As a beguiled admirer of this wonderful football phenomenon, even I have to admit that, in genuine high pressure circumstances, Ronaldo is yet to be tested. Let's just wait and see. the jury is still out on his true greatness.

☆☆☆

Ronaldo's Brazil might readily churn out players of his calibre, and those of men like Roberto Carlos, Denilson, Romario, Leonardo etc. But such fertility does not always equate to general health in the Brazilian game.

Diego Maradona: Famous No.10.

Even Brazil's legendary passion for the game doesn't always reflect itself in practical terms. Recently, a Brazilian national championship game attracted a total of 55 spectators. Gate takings were $733.40.

Try to keep a club on budget with that kind of revenue. No wonder some 2,000 Brazilian players go abroad each year.

☆☆☆

If Argentina doesn't win the World Cup this year, it won't be because their players are starved of romance.

This despite the steely disciplinarian policies of their coach Daniel Passarella, who will not allow long hair or earrings in his national squad.

On the subject of sex he has a more liberal view. Recently Passarella surprised everyone by announcing that in the World Cup Finals players will be allowed to have sex with their wives or partners, provided it is not in the team hotel.

☆☆☆

Milan legend Paolo Maldini at Manchester City? Not likely but it IS on the wish list of Noel Gallagher, member of British super pop group Oasis, a mad fan of City.

Reportedly, Gallagher recently offered to buy Maldini from AC Milan for his beloved club.

On the band's recent tour of Italy, a Milan shirt arrived in Gallagher's hotel room with an autograph by Maldini.

Paolo Maldini: On top of Noel Gallagher's Christmas wish list for Manchester City.

"No, no, no Paolo," went back the reply. "You don't understand., Forget Milan. Come to Manchester City, I will buy your contract and you can play in the band as well."

Is this the offer Paolo can't refuse? Playing in one of the world's great bands and, on weekends, turning out against Bury, Stockport or Oxford.

Mystery players?

Alex Tobin: Last week's mystery player.

Possible next Australian captain?

SCHEINFLUG ANNOUNCES U/17 SQUAD

Les Scheinflug has released details of the Australian U/17 players that went into a six day camp at the weekend. He named a full 30 players who will be preparing for the Oceania Football Confederations' qualifying games to be held in Fiji this coming May.

The FIFA/JVC World Youth Championship will be held in New Zealand in 1999 and ABSW will have full coverage of the competition.

The squad is:

Matthew Milosevic (SA)
Joss Van Strattan (NSW)
Wayne Srhoj (Qld)
Simon Story (Vic)
Bradley Groves (NSW)
Boric Ovcin (Vic)
Louis Brain (SA)
Iain Fyfe (SA)
Luke Gray (CNSW)
Jamie McMaster (NSW)
Robert Petrovski (NSW)
Scott Whalan (NSW)
Gavin Hartge (NSW)
Shane Lockart (NSW)

Fabian Lettyieri (Vic)
Naum Sekulovski (Vic)
Jade North (Qld)
Lucas Pantelis (SA)
Joseph Shippa (CNSW)
Adam Griffith (CNSW)
Jake Thomas (SA)
Mark Byrnes (NSW)
Aaron Goulding (SA)
Then Vinh (NT)
Goran Talevski (ACT)
Raihn Anwar (NNSW)
Steve Laurie (Vic)
Daniel Aliffi (CNSW)

(SA) South Australia
(Qld) Queensland
(CNSW) Central NSW
(ACT) Australian Cap. Territory
(NSW) New South Wales
(Vic) Victoria
(NT) Northern Territory
(NNSW) Northern NSW

Les Scheinflug: Taking the Under 17 Squad for a six day training camp.

WOMEN'S WRITES

BY JANENE MAR

ANSETT AUSTRALIA SUMMER SERIES

CRUNCH CROSSOVER ROUND

The 1997/98 Ansett Australia Summer Series resumes this Friday with the crossover round in Canberra, the one time in the season where the Pool A teams are pitted against Pool B, and a round where all six teams will face their toughest challenge.

With this season's league climaxing with a Top Four finals weekend, the outcome of this weekend's vital points race will go a long way towards deciding each team's Top Four fortunes.

Fitness and mental toughness will be tested to the max after the competition's eleven week lay off. All teams were given a week and a half to two weeks off over the Christmas period, but otherwise have been grinding away on the training pitch since the end of the first rounds in early November.

"You've got to give them time off — basically they play all year round," said ACTAS coach Chris Tanzey. "It's really a balancing act — not letting them get bored, whilst keeping them fit."

QAS coach Gary Phillips, in his first year of national league, was more outspoken about the break in play. "With our last game at the end of October, it's been three months to the next game. To me, for a national league, it's ridiculous. It's unfair on the players — there's no motivation for them over three months. It's a lot to ask for them to be at their best. I can see their point of view, with the internationals taking place, but why not continue on after that?"

This weekend in the Canberra sun, each outfit will face the heavy schedule of three matches in as many days against opposition they have yet to face. None of the six coaches are prepared to make any predictions, all too aware of the challenge before them and no easy games. Basically, it's a weekend where anything could happen.

"It's normally hard enough with the two games, but everyone will have three games which is tough with tiredness and injuries," said Tanzey. "It becomes a battle of endurance."

The remainder of this second season of national league holds one big added significance. National coach Greg Brown is scheduled to announce the national squad and first AIS scholarship holders at the conclusion of the league. This is now the last chance for players to stand up and prove their worth.

Three regular rounds have been contested so far in the league, with the South Australians clear leaders of Pool A, and New South Wales narrowly topping Pool B. With only one Pool A round completed to Pool B's two, before this Crossover round, the two ladders, in comparison, appear a little deceptive at this stage.

Greg Brown: Scheduled to announce his national squad shortly.

Round 1 — Pool B Sydney 24-26 Oct '97				Round 2 — Pool A Brisbane 31 Oct - 2 Nov '97				Round 3 — Pool B Newcastle 7-9 Nov '97			
ACT	3	NSW	2	SA	3	QLD	1	NSW	3	NNSW	2
NNSW	1	ACT	0	SA	2	VIC	0	NSW	3	ACT	0
NSW	2	NNSW	2	QLD	3	VIC	1	ACT	1	NNSW	0

Top Goalscorers
As at end Round 3

3	Katrina Boyd NSW
3	Sharon Black SA
2	Alicia Ferguson QLD
2	Kaye Yardin NSW
2	Tracie McGovern NNSW

Points Table — Pool A — End Round 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
SA	2	2	-	-	5	1	6
QLD	2	1	-	1	4	4	3
VIC	2	-	-	2	1	5	0

Points Table — Pool B — End Round 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
NSW	4	2	1	1	10	7	7
ACT	4	2	0	2	4	6	6
NNSW	4	1	1	2	5	6	4

Ansett Australia Summer Series 1997/98 Crossover Round

Canberra — West Belconnen Leagues Club, Hardwick Cres, Holt
*NB: The Sunday match times have been altered from the original times.

Fri 23 Jan	3.00pm	ACT v VIC
	5.00pm	NNSW v SA
	7.00pm	NSW v QLD
Sat 24 Jan	3.00pm	NSW v VIC
	5.00pm	ACT v SA
	7.00pm	NNSW v QLD
Sun 25 Jan	11.00am	NSW v SA
	1.00pm	NNSW v VIC
	3.00pm	ACT v QLD
30 Jan - 1 Feb	Melbourne	Pool A
6-8 Feb	Canberra	Pool B
13-15 Feb	Adelaide	Pool A
27 Feb - 1 Mar	TBA	Top 4 Finals

WHAT THE COACHES THINK:

ACT ACADEMY OF SPORT
CHRIS TANZEY

"I can't be displeased with the first rounds — we're just a point behind after both our away legs. The only one disappointing performance was our 3-0 loss to NSW, but then we came back the next day and won, which was good mentally. Overall I'm pleased, and we're still well in the hunt. We've done all we can (over the break) and I think we're on target."

NSW INSTITUTE OF SPORT
CONNIE SELBY

"I wasn't really happy with our first round. We let the opposition back in the game and went to sleep in the second half twice. In the second round against ACT, I thought we did really well and put away our chances, and our three against NNSW were all good goals.

The players are looking good and fairly sharp."

NORTHERN NSW
MARK JONES

"We played reasonably alright, but we didn't take our chances, which in the end cost us. I was happy with the football, just not the finishing.

We'll be taking the bus to Canberra the day before. Travelling the same day last year cost us against SA.

We're confident on the day we can match anyone. I think the results will come if we can finish."

QLD ACADEMY OF SPORT
GARY PHILLIPS

"I was disappointed with the first round and I accept some of the blame — our preparation was not as good as it should have been. The first game was disappointing especially after the 1-0 lead — we gave the game away.

There have been some positive signs over the break too. The players' strength has improved — in the gym, their speed and technical work.

At this stage, I'm just looking to acquire more points than SA and Victoria."

SA SPORTS INSTITUTE
KEVIN McCORMACK

"I couldn't help but be pleased with our first round. After torrential rain held up our flight, we rushed to our first game and turned it around after being 1-0 down. Then the next day against Victoria, after the best first half, we were shattered and just hung on. To get the full points away under the circumstances was fantastic.

With Tracey Wheeler and Tal Karp coming in early, we'll have the squad together for a week before Canberra. The side's looking good — I'm quite happy with the way they're shaping up."

ITC VICTORIA
JEFF OLVER

"We were a bit disappointed with the way we played in the first round — we were competitive, but we conceded a couple of silly goals.

"We've worked very hard over the break on our fitness, and the players are ready to go.

"We expect to put up a good showing and make it difficult for the others."

SHE'S BACK

The long awaited return of Aussie midfielder Joanne Peters is set to eventuate this weekend in Canberra.

Injured during last year's national league, after an impressive performance against the USA, it has been a long hard battle for Peters — rehabilitation taking longer than predicted after knee reconstruction surgery.

"I can't wait to get back into it," said Peters on the eve of her first training session back with the team a few weeks ago. "It will be a good time to come back."

Meanwhile, two South Australian Aussie reps will be unavailable for national league with injury woes. Kristyn Swaffer underwent ankle reconstruction surgery earlier this month after sustaining the injury in Europe last August. Swaffer is expected to be out for 3-4 months.

After starting the league season, Dianne Alagich suffered further tendonitis problems with her knee, and had another operation before Christmas. The defender will be out of action for another couple of months.

Joanne Peters: Back from injury.

CHINA HOST TOP TOURNAMENT

China is hosting a four-nation tournament which commenced two days ago and features big guns USA, Norway and Sweden.

The round-robin tournament in Guangdong kicks off a big year on the international scene in preparation for next year's World Cup. Play continues tomorrow and concludes on Saturday.

Penrith-Nepean Panthers
1st Division
Womens State League
Final Selection Trials
20th-22nd January
7:30pm - 9:00pm
Cook Park St. Marys
For further information contact
John Pentecost 047 304 696 or
Don Gomez 0411 789 728
Proudly sponsored by Penrith Mazda

Around the Globe

ENGLAND

Alan Shearer made his first appearance of the season for Newcastle United on Saturday but fellow striker Kevin Gallacher upstaged him with a hat-trick in Blackburn's 5-0 Premier League thrashing of Aston Villa.

Second-placed Blackburn moved five points behind Manchester United, who weren't playing until Monday. Roy Hodgson's side were in irresistible form and after Tim Sherwood put them in front after 21 minutes and Gallacher made it two soon after, and a repeat of August's 4-0 Villa Park demolition always looked likely. Gallacher completed his hat-trick in the second half, taking his season's tally to 16, and Stuart Ripley finished things off with a 25-metre drive.

England striker Shearer, out since July with an ankle injury, came on as a 72nd minute substitute and set up Georgian Temuri Ketsbaia's last minute winner in Newcastle's 2-1 home win over Bolton. John Barnes had put Newcastle ahead after six minutes with his 200th career goal, but Bolton's lethal Nathan Blake equalised.

Defeat for Tottenham could have sent them to the bottom but Jurgen Klinsmann saved them, scoring his first since returning in December as his side edged out 10 man West Ham 1-0 at White Hart Lane. West Ham had Samassi Abou sent-off just before half-time after a clash with Ramon Vega. The Frenchman is likely to be in trouble with the authorities as he refused to go and eventually had to be hauled from the pitch by his manager Harry Redknapp.

Coventry and Arsenal each had a man sent-off in a lively 2-2 draw at Highfield Road. Arsenal's defence was ragged throughout the first-half and only a series of good saves by England goalkeeper David Seaman, often from the slippery Darren Huckerby, kept his team in the game.

Noel Whelan found a way past after a well-crafted move in the 21st minute but five minutes into the second half Dennis Bergkamp lobbed an equaliser, against the run of play, after a mistake by Paul Williams and more clumsy defending allowed Nicolas Anelka to put Arsenal ahead. Coventry equalised from the penalty spot following a pointless handball by Patrick Viera. The Frenchman stupidly chose to debate the decision with the referee and was sent-off.

Dion Dublin, who had earlier been booed by the Coventry fans following his midweek attempts to move to Middlesbrough, calmly slotted home the spot kick. Coventry also ended a man short after Williams was controversially sent-off for a trip on Bergkamp. Furious Coventry manager Gordon Strachan said the refereeing was "a disgrace."

"The standard of football has gone up but the refereeing has gone down. We hammered them — make no mistake — but the refereeing cost us the game."

Liverpool, seeking their sixth successive win, struggled to break down Leicester at Filbert Street and had to settle for a goalless draw.

Barnsley collected a rare win, 1-0 over fellow-strugglers Crystal Palace while Wimbledon against Derby ended 0-0.

In the First Division, Kevin Phillips equalled Brian Clough's 1950s club record of scoring in six consecutive league games during Sunderland's 1-0 win over Manchester City.

Barnsley	1	**C Palace**	0
Ward 26			
Blackburn	5	**A Villa**	0
Sherwood 21			
Gallacher 29, 54, 68			
Ripley 81			
Coventry City	2	**Arsenal**	2
Whelan 21		Bergkamp 50	
Dublin 66p		Anelka 57	
Leeds Utd	1	**Sheff Wed**	2
Pembridge 63og		Newsome 51	
		Booth 83	
Leicester	0	**Liverpool**	0
Newcastle	2	**Bolton**	1
Barnes 6		Blake 72	
Ketsbaia 90			
Tottenham	1	**West Ham**	0
Klinsmann 7			
Wimbledon	0	**Derby**	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
Man Utd	22	10	1	0	32	4	5	3	3	19	12 49
B'burn	23	8	3	1	30	12	4	5	2	14	12 44
Chelsea	22	7	2	1	20	8	6	1	5	29	14 42
L'pool	22	8	0	3	25	10	4	5	2	13	9 41
Arsenal	22	7	2	2	23	9	3	6	2	16	17 38
Derby	23	8	3	0	23	6	2	3	7	14	23 36
Leeds	23	5	3	4	17	14	5	2	4	15	13 35
West Ham	23	9	0	1	24	6	2	1	10	10	27 34
Leicester	23	3	7	3	13	11	4	2	4	13	11 30
Newcastle	22	6	3	4	15	14	2	2	5	9	14 29
Sheff Wed	23	6	2	4	20	18	2	3	6	16	28 29
A Villa	23	5	3	3	17	15	2	3	7	9	18 27
Soton	22	6	1	4	18	14	1	3	7	7	16 25
Wimbledon	22	3	3	6	12	16	3	4	3	9	10 25
Coventry	23	4	7	1	19	14	1	2	8	4	19 24
Everton	22	4	2	4	14	15	2	3	7	9	17 23
Cl Palace	23	0	4	6	7	18	5	4	4	14	14 23
Tottenham	23	5	3	4	13	15	1	2	8	7	24 23
Bolton	23	3	7	1	9	7	1	3	8	11	28 22
Barnsley	23	4	2	5	12	20	2	1	9	8	37 21

DIVISION ONE

Birmingham	0	Huddersfield	0
Man City	0	Sunderland	1
Middlesbrough	1	Ipswich	1
Norwich City	1	N Forest	0
Oxford United	1	Charlton	2
Port Vale	2	Portsmouth	1
QPR	0	Tranmere	0
SheffUnited	1	Wolves	0
Swindon Town	0	Reading	2
WBA	0	Crewe	1
Stoke City	2	Bradford	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
N Forest	27	11	2	1	32	13	5	4	4	13	12 54
M'brough	27	8	3	2	24	9	7	4	3	20	15 52
Charlton	27	10	2	1	29	13	5	3	6	22	22 50
Sunderland	26	7	4	2	23	10	7	3	3	20	14 49
Sheff Utd	27	10	3	0	26	10	3	7	4	17	19 49
Wolves	27	9	4	0	27	11	4	2	8	10	16 45
WBA	27	8	2	4	14	10	4	4	5	13	15 42
B'ham	27	5	5	3	12	7	5	5	4	20	12 40
Stockport	26	8	4	1	28	13	3	1	9	16	24 38
Swindon	27	8	3	3	23	14	3	2	8	9	26 38
Bradford	27	6	5	2	14	12	3	5	6	12	16 37
Norwich	27	6	4	4	14	17	4	2	7	13	22 36
QPR	27	6	6	2	16	11	2	3	8	14	29 33
Reading	27	5	4	5	19	20	3	5	5	8	18 33
Ipswich	26	4	4	4	13	12	3	7	4	17	15 32
Stoke	27	5	3	5	17	22	3	5	6	12	19 32
Crewe	27	4	2	8	15	23	5	2	6	16	17 31
Port Vale	27	5	4	5	16	14	3	1	9	13	24 29
Huds'field	27	4	3	6	16	17	3	4	7	14	23 28
Oxford U	27	5	4	4	17	14	2	2	10	15	28 27
Man City	27	4	3	7	18	15	3	3	7	13	17 27
Tranmere	26	5	4	4	18	14	1	4	8	10	20 26
Bury	26	3	7	3	12	13	1	6	6	12	21 25
P'mouth	26	5	2	7	20	25	1	3	8	10	19 23

DIVISION TWO

Blackpool	1	Bournemouth	0
Bristol R	1	Burnely	0
Chesterfield	2	Plymouth1	
Fulham	0	Wycombe	0
Gillingham	0	York City	0
Grimsby	4	Brentford	0
Millwall	0	Wrexham	1
Northampton	2	Carlisle	1
Oldham	2	Luton	1
Southend	0	Walsall	1
Watford	3	Preston	1
Wigan	0	Bristol C	3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
Bristol C	27	12	1	1	31	10	6	3	4	20	11 58
Watford	27	9	3	1	24	11	8	4	2	18	8 58
Bristol R	27	6	1	6	20	22	6	6	2	20	17 43
N'hampton	27	9	3	2	21	11	2	6	5	11	14 42
Grimsby	26	7	4	2	21	7	4	4	5	15	16 41
Fulham	27	7	6	1	16	7	4	2	7	17	19 41
Oldham	26	9	4	0	28	13	1	6	6	12	18 40
Chest'field	28	7	6	1	17	10	2	7	5	10	13 40
Gillingham	28	7	4	3	19	14	3	4	7	16	24 38
York	27	8	2	3	18	10	1	9	4	14	19 38
Wrexham	26	5	6	2	18	15	4	4	5	14	15 37
Blackpool	27	8	4	2	22	15	2	2	9	13	27 36
B'mouth	27	7	5	2	19	8	2	4	7	15	22 36
Walsall	26	7	4	2	19	10	3	2	8	11	21 36
Millwall	26	5	4	5	17	16	5	1	6	13	17 35
Wigan	26	6	3	4	25	21	3	2	8	13	20 32
Preston	27	6	2	5	15	12	3	3	8	18	21 32
Luton	27	4	3	7	21	27	4	5	4	12	13 32
Wycombe	27	5	6	2	18	13	2	4	8	15	25 31
Southend	28	5	5	5	18	20	2	1	10	12	34 27
Brentford	28	6	4	3	21	15	0	5	10	7	33 27
Carlisle	27	4	3	6	15	18	3	2	9	20	27 26
Plymouth	27	4	4	5	21	20	1	6	7	11	20 25
Burnley	27	4	7	2	15	12	1	2	11	10	25 24

DIVISION THREE

Chester	0	Barnet	1
Exeter City	5	Doncaster	1
Leyton Orient	3	Brighton	1
Macclesfield	2	Hartlepool	1
Mansfield T	1	Scunthorpe	0
Notts County	3	Cardiff	1
Peterborough	3	Rochdale	1
Rotherham	3	Darlington	0
Scarborough	2	Lincoln	2
Shrewsbury	1	Cambridge	
Swansea	2	Hull	0
Colchester	1	Torquay	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
Notts Cty	27	7	4	2	23	14	9	4	1	22	12 56
Peterboro	27	9	3	2	30	12	4	7	2	21	14 49
Rotherham	27	7	3	3	28	21	5	6	3	18	15 45
Barnet	27	7	4	3	22	12	6	2	5	17	18 45
Scarboro	27	9	2	3	26	16	4	3	6	17	23 44
Exeter	27	6	6	2	23	13	5	5	3	19	16 44
Chester	27	9	4	1	22	6	4	0	9	17	27 43
Lincoln	27	5	5	3	15	14	6	5	3	15	16 43
Hartlepool	28	7	7	0	25	12	2	7	5	15	20 41
Torquay	27	8	2	3	22	13	3	6	5	15	21 41
Leyton O	27	8	3	3	25	11	3	4	6	11	13 40
Mac'field	26	10	3	0	23	7	0	6	7	12	23 39
Colchester	27	8	3	3	23	15	2	4	7	20	28 37
Mansfield	27	6	6	2	26	17	2	4	7	9	14 34
Scunthorpe	26	4	4	5	15	18	5	2	6	16	17 33
Cambridge	27	6	4	3	23	18	1	7	6	14	19 32
Cardiff	26	3	9	2	13	13	3	5	4	12	14 32
Shrewsbury	26	7	1	5	21	18	1	6	6	16	21 31
Darlington	26	7	5	1	26	15	0	3	10	8	26 29
Rochdale	28	8	1	4	23	9	1	1	13	9	30 29
Swansea	27	4	4	5	11	11	4	0	10	15	29 28
Hull	27	5	4	4	24	21	1	1	12	13	30 23
Brighton	27	1	5	8	11	21	3	4	6	12	18 21
Doncaster	26	2	3	7	8	26	0	3	11	10	44 12

SCOTLAND

Celtic's Scottish Premier Division fixture at Dundee United and Aberdeen's home game against Dunfermline were postponed on Saturday as rain and snow swept the country.

Dozens of other matches were called off in the lower divisions and minor leagues.

Rangers' home clash with Motherwell went ahead at Ibrox and Kilmarnock were able to play Hearts.

PREMIER LEAGUE

Aberdeen	P	**Dunfermline**	P
Dundee Utd	P	**Celtic**	P
Hibernian	0	**St Johnstone**	1
		Grant 83	
Kilmarnock	2	**Hearts**	2
Wright 40		McCann 6	
Reilly 76		MacPherson 45og	
Rangers	1	**Motherwell**	0
Cleland 23			

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
Rangers	22	10	2	0	36	11	4	4	2	18	12 48
Hearts	22	7	1	2	25	16	7	2	3	24	14 45
Celtic	21	7	1	2	22	5	6	2	3	15	9 42
Kilmarnock	22	5	2	4	14	16	3	4	4	11	21 30
St Johnstone	22	4	2	5	12	16	4	3	4	12	13 29
Dundee Utd	21	4	4	2	17	8	2	3	6	14	24 25
Dunfermline	21	2	5	4	12	17	3	1	6	10	22 21
Motherwell	22	2	3	5	10	14	3	2	7	15	24 20
Aberdeen	21	3	4	4	12	14	1	3	6	9	22 19
Hibernian	22	4	3	5	20	17	0	3	7	6	19 18

DIVISION ONE

Airdrie	P	Ayr Utd	P
Morton	0	Dundee	0
Hamilton	P	Stirling Alb	P
Raith R	P	Falkirk	P
St Mirren	0	Partick T	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
Dundee	22	4	4	3	12	7	8	3	0	22	5 43
Falkirk	21	6	1	3	16	13	6	2	3	21	16 39
Raith	21	6	2	2	16	6	4	3	4	16	15 35
Airdrie	21	5	5	1	15	11	3	4	3	9	12 33
Hamilton	20	4	3	3	10	11	4	2	4	17	15 29
St Mirren	22	5	2	4	15	15	2	2	7	11	20 25
Ayr	20	4	1	6	19	19	2	3	4	7	13 22
Partick	22	2	2	6	17	23	3	5	4	12	14 22
Stirling	21	2	5	4	13	21	3	2	5	15	17 22
Morton	22	2	3	6	10	18	3	2	6	14	16 20

DIVISION TWO

Brechin City	P	**Queen of the South**	P
Caledonian Thistle	5	**Clyde**	1
Thomson 1		O'Neill 79	
Wilson 20			
Stewart 69, 83			
Robertson 80			
Livingston	P	**Clydebank**	P
Stenhousemuir	P	**Forfar Athletic**	P
Stranraer	2	**East Fife**	3
Young 35		Dyer 34	
Lansdowne 64		Ronald 50	
		Kirk 90	

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
Clydebank	19	4	5	1	16	8	6	3	0	13	6 38
Livingston	18	6	1	1	16	9	3	5	2	13	11 33
Queen of Sth	18	5	2	1	13	9	3	1	6	17	21 27
East Fife	20	4	1	4	17	19	4	2	5	11	17 27
Stranraer	20	5	3	3	23	16	1	4	4	9	15 25
Forfar	19	3	3	4	20	20	3	3	3	15	14 24
Clyde	20	4	2	3	12	8	2	4	5	14	21 24
Inverness Cal	19	4	5	2	21	11	1	2	5	16	17 22
S'housemuir	18	4	3	3	16	15	1	2	5	8	15 20
Brechin	19	2	4	3	9	12	1	3	6	11	26 16

DIVISION THREE

Alloa	P	**Arbroath**	P
Berwick Rangers	3	**East Stirling**	1
Martin 44		Barr 57	
Clark 79			
Forrester 88			
Cowdenbeath	P	**Albion Rovers**	P
Dumbarton	0	**Queen's Park**	0
Montrose	P	**Ross County**	P

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	APts
Arbroath	20	7	2	2	27	14	5	1	3	16	10 39
Alloa	19	5	0	4	19	12	7	0	3	20	11 36
Ross County	19	5	1	3	26	13	5	3	2	17	11 34
East Stirling	20	7	0	3	21	11	4	1	5	10	17 34
Albion	19	6	1	1	16	7	3	2	6	17	27 30
Queen's Park	21	4	2	4	17	15	3	5	3	12	11 28
Berwick	20	4	3	4	18	18	4	1	4	13	15 28
Dumbarton	20	0	5	5	8	15	4	2	4	19	20 19
Montrose	19	2	2	6	12	19	2	2	5	13	28 16
Cowdenbeath	19	2	1	7	5	19	2	0	7	6	19 13

Around the Globe

EURO WRAP-UP

Inter Milan slipped to their second defeat f the season while Real Madrid gained the ead in Spain this weekend.

ITALY

Inter Milan suffered their second loss of he season as Bari claimed a surprise 1-0 uccess at the San Siro courtesy of a 77th inute goal by South Africa striker hilemon Masinga.

Second-placed Juventus took full advanage with a 3-1 win at Bologna, thanks to wo goals from Filippo Inzaghi and a superb 5-metre free kick from Alessandro Del iero.

The reigning champions, with 35 points rom 18 matches, now trail Inter by a single oint at the top of Serie A.

Udinese needed an equaliser from Oliver ierhoff to draw 1-1 with 10-man Atalanta. Bergamo and are four points further back in hird.

FRANCE

Bosnian defender Muhamed Kojnic nabled champions Monaco to scrape an xtra-time 2-1 victory over Fourth Division Dijon in the first round of the French Cup.

Strasbourg, who boast wins over Rangers, Liverpool and Inter Milan in the JEFA Cup this season did not escape embarrassment, losing 2-1 to Third Division Epinal, after having defender Jean-Luc Dogon sent off in the 16th minute.

Auxerre also had a fright when they found themselves 1-0 down to amateur side Segre after 20 minutes, but they recovered to win 2-1.

Bordeaux had no such problems with amateur opposition as they crushed Aubervilliers 7-1, Sylvain Wiltord scoring four and Jean-Pierre Papin three.

SPAIN

Real Madrid beat struggling Salamanca 1-0 to go top but were still jeered off by their fiard to please supporters. Real were well below their best and needed an opportunist effort from Italian defender Christian Panucci to take the points.

Third-placed Real Sociedad are five points adrift of Barcelona after suffering their first defeat in 18 league games, 3-1 at Racing Santander.

Athletic Bilbao now trail Real Sociedad only on goal difference after a 0-0 home draw with Real Betis.

PORTUGAL

Porto stretched their lead to 11 points with a 2-1 victory over Maritimo as their nearest challengers stumbled.

Second-placed Vitoria Guimaraes could only draw 0-0 at Vitoria Setubal while Rio Ave, third in the standings, crashed 3-0 at home to lowly Farense.

GREECE

OFI Iraklion	2	Xanthi	1
Kavala	0	Veria	1
Ionikos Piraeus	1	Apollon	1
Panathinaikos	2	Panionios	1
Paniliakos	1	Kalamata	1
Iraklis	3	Panachaiki	1
Athinaikos	1	Proodeftiki	0
AEK	3	PAOK	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEK	18	15	2	1	38	14	47
O'piakos	17	14	1	2	45	14	43
Pan'naikos	18	14	1	3	42	16	43
PAOK	18	11	4	3	33	19	37
Ionikos	18	10	4	4	30	18	34
Iraklis	18	9	4	5	23	19	31
OFI	18	8	3	7	23	33	27
Apollon	18	7	4	7	19	21	25
Xanthi	18	7	3	8	32	33	24
Paniliakos	18	5	6	7	24	28	21
Panionios	18	6	2	10	22	25	20
Panahaiki	18	6	1	11	18	32	19
Veria	18	5	2	11	21	32	17
Ethnikos	17	5	1	11	10	22	16
Proodeftiki	18	4	4	10	17	33	16
Athinaikos	18	4	3	11	14	26	15
Kalamata	18	3	4	11	10	25	13
Kavala	18	2	3	13	20	38	9

ITALY

Atalanta	1	Udinese	1
Bologna	1	Juventus	3
Fiorentina	1	Lazio	3
Inter	0	Bari	1
Lecce	1	Sampdoria	3
Napoli	0	Brescia	3
AS Roma	1	Piacenza	1
Vicenza	1	Empoli	0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	16	11	3	2	31	14	36
Juventus	16	10	5	1	36	13	35
Udinese	16	9	4	3	30	25	31
Lazio	16	8	4	4	29	15	28
Parma	15	7	5	3	27	16	26
Sampdoria	16	7	5	4	33	29	26
Roma	16	6	7	3	26	17	25
Fiorentina	16	6	6	4	34	20	24
Milan	15	6	6	3	19	13	24
Vicenza	16	6	3	7	19	30	21
Bari	16	5	4	7	13	23	19
Brescia	16	5	2	9	22	27	17
Bologna	16	3	7	6	23	26	16
Empoli	16	4	3	9	21	29	15
Piacenza	16	2	8	6	13	21	14
Atalanta	16	3	5	8	15	26	14
Lecce	16	3	2	11	13	33	11
Napoli	16	1	3	12	13	40	6

FRANCE

Rennes	1	Chateauroux	0
Le Grau-du-Roi	0	Istres	0
Istres won 5-3 on penalties			
Vermelles	0	Argentan	2
Caen	1	Toulouse	0
St Denis St Leu	0	Lyon	2
Bastia	1	Niort	0
Epinal	2	Strasbourg	1
Dijon	1	Monaco	2
Aubervilliers	1	Bordeaux	7
Thouars	1	Paris St Germain	3
Segre	1	Auxerre	2
Lens	2	Le Havre	0
Cannes	2	Valence	0
Sete	0	Marseille	3
Laval	1	Angouleme	3
Rouen	0	Nancy	1
Champagnol	0	Mulhouse	2
Vitre	0	Lorient	4
Chatellerault	1	Sochaux	2
Ales	3	Aurillac	0
Toulon	4	Nice	2
Le Mans	1	Metz	1
Metz won on penalties			
Bretignolles	0	Nantes	3
Sedan	3	Louhans	1
Pau	0	Fontenay	0
Pau won 4-2 on penalties			

SPAIN

Oviedo	3	Real Zaragoza	0
Celta Vigo	1	Espanyol	0
Valladolid	2	Atletico Madrid	1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	19	13	2	4	43	26	41
R Madrid	20	11	7	2	35	18	40
R Sociedad	20	9	9	2	28	14	36
At Bilbao	20	9	8	3	30	21	35
At Madrid	21	9	7	5	43	28	34
Celta Vigo	21	10	4	7	31	25	34
Espanyol	21	8	8	5	27	15	32

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1978 ARGENTINA
1982 ITALY
1986 ARGENTINA
1990 GERMANY
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- Fully Escorted

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7 Match Category 2	5,225	6,025	6,825
7 Match Category 1	5,462	6,262	7,062
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- Transfers to and from Airports
- Hotel Accommodation
- Intercity Transfers by either Air or Luxury Coach
- Fully Escorted

Package (Prices per person)	--- Tourist	---- Superior Tourist	----- First Class
6 Match Category 3	5,967	6,567	7,168
6 Match Category 2	6,450	7,257	7,857
6 Match Category 1	7,497	8,297	8,897
Single Supplement	1,280	1,920	2,560

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- Transfers to and from Airports & Stadiums
- Hotel Accommodation
- Intercity Transfers by either Air or Luxury Coach
- Fully Escorted

Package (Prices per person)	--- Tourist	---- Superior Tourist	----- First Class
15 Match Category 3	7,086	10,027	11,976
15 Match Category 2	8,625	11,282	12,882
15 Match Category 1	9,690	12,550	14,150
Single Supplement	2,560	3,840	5,120

All package prices based on Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane.
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Published 1st June 1997. Recommended Prices Only. Prices may vary due to Exchange Rates.

SOUTH AMERICA

— Compiled by Mario Etchart —

The Chileans Are Coming

The Chilean national team, who qualified for the 1998 World Cup to be held in France, finishing fourth in the South American qualifying rounds, behind Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay, will tour Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand at the end of January and the beginning of February.

They will participate in the Carlsberg Cup, a four nation tournament with the local side Hong Kong, Nigeria and Russia. It will be followed by a game against New Zealand at Auckland's Ericsson stadium on Wednesday February 4. On Saturday February 7, the Chileans will face Australia at Melbourne's Olympic Park, and on Wednesday February 11, they will play England at London's Wembley stadium.

It will be Chile's first visit to Australia.

In other internationals they will face South Korea, Japan, Bulgaria and finally Tunisia in the lead up to the Finals.

The Chileans will arrive in Australia with its best squad. The only doubt, until now, were for the presence of 1997 'South American Player of the Year' Marcelo Salas, who currently plays for Argentine champion River Plate, and Inter Milan star striker Ivan 'Bang Bang' Zamorano.

Zamorano was the leading scorer in the South American World Cup qualifying rounds with 12 goals, followed by Marcelo Salas with 11. Salas was, as well, River Plate's highest scorer in the last Argentine league and also the Argentine league's 1997 'Player of the Year'.

The rest of the team is basically the one that played in the South American World Cup qualifying rounds, with the exception of defender Victor Hugo Castaneda.

The Chilean national team will arrive in Melbourne on Thursday, February 4, and will have its first training session the same day at 6pm.

The squad includes a blend of experienced campaigners and young internationals, and they form the nucleus of the team that will play in France '98. The Chileans are in Group B with Italy, Cameroon and Austria, and they will make their debut against Italy.

Ivan Zamorano: The striker from Inter Milan will tour Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand with Chile?

Defenders Pedro Reyes, Ronald Fuentes, Francisco Rojas and Javier Margas are among the best in South America while Nelson Parraguez, Jose Luis Sierra and Marcelo Vega are midfielders with great international experience.

Up front Chile have in Marcelo Salas and Ivan Zamorano two of the best and most feared forwards in the world, well supported by Rodrigo Barrera, Claudio Nunez (playing in Mexico) and Manuel Neira, one of the stars of the 1997 U/20 South American Youth Championship.

Among other youngsters, defenders Paolo Vivar, 20, and Rafael Olarra, 19, are two of the most talented players in the country, with a brilliant future ahead, while midfielder Clarence Acuna, 22, was one of the best players in the South American qualifying rounds.

The squad for the matches against New Zealand and Australia is:

Goalkeepers: Nelson Tapia (Universidad Catolica) and Marcelo Ramirez (Colo Colo).

Defenders: Francisco Rojas and Pedro Reyes (Colo Colo), Ronald Fuentes (Universidad de Chile), Javier Margas (Universidad Catolica), Rafael Olarra (Audax Italiano), Paolo Vivar (Cobreloa), Jorge Gomez (Deportes Temuco) and Luis Fuentes (Coquimbo Unido).

Midfielders: Nelson Parraguez (Universidad Catolica), Rodrigo Valenzuela (America, Mexico), Moises Villarroel and Marcelo Vega (Santiago Wanderers), Clarence Acuna and Pablo Galdames (Universidad de Chile), Fernando Cornejo (Cobreloa) and Jose Luis Sierra (Colo Colo).

Strikers: Juan Carreno (Deportes Concepcion), Manuel Neira (Colo Colo), Caludio Nunez (Nuevo Leon, Mexico), Rodrigo Barrera (Universidad de Chile), Marcelo Salas (River Plate, Argentina) and Ivan Zamorano (Inter Milan, Italy).

Coach: Nelson Acosta.

Argentine League The Top Ten Players

While the Argentine press selected Chilean international and River Plate striker Marcelo Salas as the 1997 'Argentine Player of the Year', the prestigious magazine 'El Grafico', ironically, didn't include the prolific scorer among the league's ten best players of last year's championship.

Two foreign players are among the best ten, midfielder Victor Lopez (Uruguay) and goalkeeper Oscar Cordoba (Colombia), while midfielders Cristian Bassedas and Marcelo Gallardo, and goalkeeper German Burgos are currently in the Argentine national team.

According to the magazine the top ten players were:

	Player	Team
1	Christian Bassedas	Velez Sarsfield
2	German Burgos	River Plate
3	Marcelo Gallardo	River Plate
4	Victor Lopez	Ferro Carril Oeste
5	Marcelo Delgado	Racing Club
6	Oscar Cordoba	Boca Juniors
7	Oscar Passet	San Lorenzo
8	Andres Gugliepietro	Gimnasia y Esgrima
9	Cristian Zermatten	Argentinos Juniors
10	Gaston Sessa	Rosario Cen

Passarella's 53 Choices

During the South American 1998 World Cup qualifying rounds and the 1997 Copa America in Bolivia, Argentine national coach Daniel Passarella used 53 players.

Between the South American World Cup qualifying rounds and the 1997 Copa America, Argentina won 9 matches, drew 8 and lost 3; playing a total of 20 games.

The Argentines finished first in the qualifying rounds, but were eliminated in the Copa America's first round.

Passarella tried the following players:

7 goalkeepers: Ignacio Ganzalez (Racing Club), Miguel Bossio (Estudiantes de La Plata), Fernando Passet (San Lorenzo), German Burgos (River Plate), Pablo Caballero (Velez Sarsfield), Marcelo Ojeda (Tenerife) and Carlos Roa (Mallorca, Spain).

15 defenders: Roberto Ayala (Napoli, Italy), Eduardo Berizzo (River Plate), Fernando Caceres (Valencia, Spain), Raul Cardozo (Velez Sarsfield), Jose Chamot (Lazio, Italy), Hernan Diaz (River Plate), Jorge Martinez (Independiente), Pablo Paz (Tenerife, Spain), Mauricio Pellegrino (Velez Sarsfield), Mauricio Pineda (Boca Juniors), Pablo Rotchen (Independiente), Roberto Sensini, Juan Pablo Sorin (River Plate), Nelson Vivas (Boca Juniors) and Javier Zanetti (Inter Milan, Italy).

20 midfielders: Kily Gonzalez (Valladolid, Spain), Jose Albornoz (Gimnasia y Esgrima La Plata), Roberto Molina (Independiente), Matias Almeyda (Lazio, Italy), Leonardo Astrada (River Plate), Christian Bassedas (Velez Sarsfield), Sergio Berti (River Plate), Juan Jose Borrelli (River Plate), Diego Cagna (Boca Juniors), Rodolfo Cardoso (Werder Bremen, Germany), Marcelo Gallardo (River Plate), Nestor Gorosito (San Lorenzo).

11 Strikers: Abel Balbo (AC Roma, Italy), Claudio Caniggia (Boca Juniors), Gabriel Batistua (Fiorentina, Italy), Jose Luis Calderon (Napoli, Italy), Hernan Crespo (Parma, Italy), Marcelo Delgado (Racing Club), Juan Esnaider (Espanol, Spain), Martin Posse (Velez Sarsfield), Patricio Camps (Velez Sarsfield), Claudio Lopez (Valencia Spain), Julio Cruz (Anderlecht, Holland).

Only 22 players will go to France '98. Who are they?

A possible squad is:

Goalkeepers: Carlos Roa, German Burgos and Pablo Caballero

Defenders: Roberto Ayala, Jose Chamot, Hernan Diaz, Pablo Paz, Roberto Sensini, Juan Pablo Sorin, Javier Zanetti

Midfielders: Juan Veron, Christian Bassedas, Matias Almeyda, Leonardo Astrada, Diego Simeone, Sergio Berti, Ariel Ortega, Marcelo Gallardo

Strikers: Gabriel Batistuta, Claudio Lopez, Hernan Crespo and Marcelo Delgado

The 'BIG NO', however, will go to Fernando Redondo, not a great favourite at this stage.

Oscar Ruggeri: The Most Capped Argentine

Former Argentine international defender Oscar Ruggeri, who retired last year after an illustrious career, has finished the most capped player in the history of football in Argentina, with 98 matches between 1983 and 1994.

Former Argentine captain Diego Maradona follows Ruggeri with 91 matches.

THE TOP 11 CAPPED PLAYERS (caps in brackets):

Oscar Ruggeri	(98)
Diego Maradona	(91)
Ruben Gallego	(73)
Daniel Passarella	(70)
Diego Simeone	(64)
Alberto Tarantini	(61)
Jorge Olguin	(60)
Jorge Burrrchaga	(59)
Ubaldo Fillol	(58)
Gabriel Battistuta	(55)
Rene Houseman	(55)

Ruggeri, Maradona and Passarella were members of the 1986 squad that won the World Cup, while Houseman, Fillol, Tarantini, Passarella and Olguin were part of the other great side of the modern Argentine footballing era, the World Cup winners in 1978.

Brazil Will Win, Say Their Fans

More than seven in ten Brazilians believe their nation will win the 1998 World Cup in France, according to a poll carried out during the last month of December by the Brazilian marketing research company Istoe-Brasmarket.

Around 71.9% of respondents were sure Brazil will win the World Cup, while 16.6% said the current world champions won't win it and 11.5% were undecided.

Meanwhile 18.4% want Brazil to face Argentina in the Final, 16.5% voted for Germany and 13.9% for Italy.

Italian Affair

By Joe Russo

ANNUAL AWARDS

The A.I.F. (Association of Italian Footballers), has awarded various rizes for 1997. Here, the players and oaches vote so it is always very special to e recognised by your peers.

The 1997 awards are as follows:

Player of the Year: Roberto Mancini Lazio)

Team of the Year: Juventus

Foreigner of the Year: Zinedine Zidane France/Juve)

Coach of the Year: Marcello Lippi Juventus)

Young Player of the Year: Filippo nzaghi (Juventus)

Goalkeeper of the Year: Angelo Peruzzi Juventus)

Referee of the Year: Pierluigi Collina

Well done to all concerned.

ITALIAN PRODUCTS

Italian dairy food company 'Parmalat' are talking about the 'globalisation of ootball' and, if the reports are accurate, his should involve the exchanging of layers and coaches between the clubs hey sponsor.

Parmalat is certainly a household name in he world of football these days. On their ooks are such teams as: Parma (Italy), the ompany actually starting life in this little ity of course, Penarol (Uruguay), Jniversidad de Catolica (Chile), Deportivo Chacao (Venezuela), Toros Nexa (Mexico), Palmeiras (Brazil), Juventuge and Santa Cruz de Recife (Brazil) and, last but not east, Carlton (Australia).

Parmalat was also, up until a few years go, the major sponsor of Real Madrid, proving that if any singular company knows bout football, it certainly is this one.

The prospect of exchanging both players and coaches sets the mind racing over the possibilities. Imagine some of the stars, of say Parma, guesting with Carlton? Chiesa, Crespo, Benarrivo, Dino Baggio and Ze Maria etc.? And what a valuable resource the Parma coach Carlo Ancelotti would be, even if it was only for a brief period.

While the idea may seem far-fetched, nothing appears impossible in football these days.

ITALIAN CUP NEWS

Tonight, Tuesday January 20, and continuing until Thursday, will see the return legs of the Italian Cup quarter-finals.

These matches should produce some excellent football, especially the local derby games at the Olympic Stadium in Rome and at the San Siro in Milan.

The first-leg matches produced the following results:

Lazio	4	Roma	1
Parma	1	Atalanta	0
Fiorentina	2	Juventus	2
AC Milan	5	Inter Milan	0

The major upset of the round was the thrashing AC Milan handed out to their city rivals, Inter, who are currently leading the Serie A table, but then again, this is AC Milan after all.

SALAS TO LAZIO?

According to some reports in the Italian media, Chilean striker Marcelo Salas is set to sign for Lazio, not that they are short of strikers with Boksic, Casiraghi and Mancini already on their books.

Then again, other reports suggest that Lazio are not interested because the asking price by his club, River Plate of Argentina, is far too much.

Who could blame them?

Recently, Salas was voted 'Americas' Player of the Year'.

This should be an interesting story to follow, especially with France '98 where, depending upon his performances there, it may also impact greatly on his price tag.

Talent scouts from the Serie A will get an excellent opportunity to watch the player in action as Chile are in the same group as Italy.

Salas:Too expensive for Lazio?

FUNNY PERUGIA

A funny old club is Serie B's Perugia. Back in October they sacked their coach Attilio Perotti, who had taken over in the close-season after the club were relegated, and then, coach Nevio Scala left to join Borussia Dortmond in Germany.

Perotti's replacement was Alberto Bigon, who returned to Italy after a successful stint coaching Sion in Switzerland.

Bigon won 'Lo Scudetto' with Napoli in 1990 when, of course, the little genius Diego Maradona played with them.

Bigon appeared to have all the right credentials but things have gone horribly wrong for him since coming back.

He has now been sacked and his replacement is none other than ... Attilio Perotti!

I guess that is what it means to 'go the full circle'?

COPPA DI CARNEVALE

It is almost time for the 'Coppa di Carnevale' to start again. This is an annual tournament in Viareggio — a small seaside town in Tuscany.

It involves the youth teams of some of the world's leading clubs — including most of the Serie A giants. This year's tournament will comprise 32 teams, including three from Brazil for the first time.

Australia's loan representative at the 'Coppa di Carnevale'.

Australia, will as always, have its lone representative in Club Marconi. One must give credit to Marconi for constantly participating and giving the youth of its club the opportunity of a lifetime.

Marconi's group this year includes Torino, Bologna and Savoia. Good luck to the boys and as always it should be a wonderful football carnival.

SERIE A FIXTURES

This week is Round 17 — the last of the first leg encounters in the Serie A. At the half way stage of the season Italy declares a 'Winter Champion' — the team that is leading the competition at that point.

Often that team goes on to win 'Lo Scudetto'.

This year's 'Winter Champions' appears almost certainly to be Inter. The full round this weekend sees the following games:

FIXTURES FOR SERIE A

Bari — Napoli
Brescia — Parma
Empoli — Inter
Juventus — Atalanta
Lazio — Bologna
Milan — Fiorentina
Piacenza — Lecce
Sampdoria — Roma
Udinese — Vicenza

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UK STORIES

Compiled by Micky Brock

FIRST DIVISION APPLIES PRESSURE

Scottish First Division clubs grabbed the initiative in the breakaway row and could have brokered a peace plan which will restore promotion to the new Premiership.

A number of leading clubs from the First Division met with their Premiership counterparts to put forward options which would enable the $2.6 million annual support package, withdrawn before Christmas, to be put back on the table.

While there is pressure for a 12-team top flight immediately, it is likely that the settlement will consist of a ten-team Premiership with one relegation slot and compensation for the First Division side denied a play-off — exactly the proposals which were first tabled by the top ten.

A spokesman for the teams, widely thought to include at least Dundee, Raith, St Mirren and Airdrie, said they would ask the meeting of the Scottish Football League management committee to put the proposals forward to another special general meeting.

The spokesman added: "We feel strongly that this represents the best way forward, and would hope our fellow First, Second and Third Division clubs would join with us. We believe or approach is realistic and practical."

The move was welcomed by Premier representatives, who nevertheless remain wary of getting the plan through the SFL loopholes which strangled the plan last time around

SCOTTISH F.A. CUP 3RD RD DRAW

Hamilton v Rangers, IC Thistle v Annan Athletic, Dundee United v Aberdeen, St Johnstone v Partick, Hearts v Clydebank or Montrose, Livingston or Berwick v Albion Rovers, Hibernian v Raith, Dundee v St Mirren, Dumbarton v Motherwell, Airdrieonians v Ross County, Arbroath or Queen of South v Stirling Albion, Stenhousemuir or Deveronvale v Falkirk, Celtic v Greenock Morton, Stranraer or Fraserburgh v Kilmarnock, Alloa v Ayr, Dunfermline v East Stirling or Edinburgh City

(Matches to be played on Saturday, January 24).

TRANSFER NEWS

Barnsley have signed Norwegian Jan Aage Fjortoft from Sheffield United. And another Blades striker is on the move, with Brian Deane set to complete a $2 million departure to Benfica.

Barnsley manager Danny Wilson moved in for Fjortoft after watching him play in the FA Cup third round replay at Bury, but Benfica boss Graeme Souness' enticing two-and-a-half year deal for Deane seemed to scupper the transfer.

United chief executive Charles Green originally admitted the club could not contemplate selling two strikers, preferring to let Deane go to uphold a promise he made to the 29-year-old when he signed for $2 million from Leeds in the summer, that of informing him of interest from any big European club.

But in a dramatic U-turn — which leaves United with just two name forwards on their books in Dean Saunders and Gareth Taylor — the Blades have decided to part company with both players.

Fjortoft, in a bid for regular first team football again and to enhance his prospects for a place in Norway's World Cup squad, has also put pen to paper to a two-and-a-half year agreement, with Barnsley, who paid $1.6 million.

Meanwhile Tomas Brolin has signed a contract to play with Crystal Palace for the rest of the season, Swedish tabloid 'Expressen' has reported.

The newspaper said the deal would be announced at a news conference.

'The Swede is back in the First Division in earnest,' the paper said. 'Brolin has signed on with Crystal Palace.'

The 28-year old played for Crystal Palace in their 3-1 home defeat by Everton and performed well, even after just five days of training with the team.

And Crystal Palace manager Steve Coppell has beaten off competition from Newcastle to sign French under/21 defender Valirin Ismail for a club record fee of $6 million.

Ismail, 22, flew to London with his wife to discuss personal terms after Palace agreed the fee with French side Strasbourg (he will complete his move subject to passing a medical).

Former French international defender William Prunier has signed for Scottish Premier Division club Hearts until the end of the season.

The 30-year-old has just been released by Italian strugglers Napoli and will swap life at the bottom in Serie A for a possible Scottish title with Hearts, who are second in the table, one point behind Rangers.

Prunier, who has played for Auxerre, Marseille and FC Copenhagen, played two English premier league matches for Manchester United in 1996 before manager Alex Ferguson let him go.

Still in Scotland and Celtic striker Andreas Thom has agreed a transfer deal with Hertha Berlin that will bring him back to his native Germany, the Bundesliga club said.

Hertha coach, former German international Dieter Hoeness, said he expected to receive Celtic's agreement for the move in due course.

Thom's contract with the Glasgow side runs out at the end of the season and an immediate move seems likely. Celtic are reported to be receiving a transfer fee of $163,000 for a player they bought from Bayer Leverkusen for $3.6 million in July 1995, a club record at the time

However Celtic's Alan Stubbs has rocked the club with the announcement that he wants to leave.

It is a huge blow to Celtic who have stood by the defender during an horrendous spell of bad form and injury up to his current run of commanding performances, which included the two UEFA Cup clashes with Liverpool.

Celtic's record $7.5 million signing made it clear that, despite being under contract until 2001, he and his wife wanted to leave for personal and professional reasons.

FORD PAY CHAMPIONS

Manchester United are ready to announce a new $100 million shirt sponsorship deal with motor giants Ford driving them into the next millennium.

It is understood that Ford will replace current sponsors Sharp, who have forged a 13-year relationship with the Old Trafford champions, in the summer.

Alex Ferguson's side will be paid $20 million a year over the next five years to have a Ford product emblazoned on the front of their shirts.

Ford have beaten off the challenge of a number of high profile companies, including Coca Cola, to tie up their huge deal with United.

The new sponsorship will mean fans having to fork out more cash for yet another change of kit. But this time there is little United can do because of the name change.

The link with Ford, due to be officially announced next month, will now allow the shirt designers to progress with the new kit.

This will be one of the biggest shirt deals in Europe and endorses both United's and football's current lofty standing.

Ford are one of Sky Sport's main sponsors and already have links with Spanish club Valencia.

It's an increase on the current arrangement with Sharp, who paid United $15 million for their name to be on the front of the famous red shirts this season.

Still with United, Jordi Cruyff has vowed to win back his place as a regular and salvage a season of disappointment which he began as a member of Alex Ferguson's first choice line-up.

The Dutch international forward is convinced Ferguson retains faith in his ability and the departure for Benfica of Karel Poborsky — also signed in the summer of 1996 — has not diminished Cruyff's resolve.

FURIOUS KILLIE

Kilmarnock were left in the lurch by 'mercenary' goalkeeper Dragoje Lekovic as the Yugoslav international flew to Spain to sign for struggling Sporting Gijon.

The Scots have been left only 'minimal' compensation despite Lekovic signing a two-year contract last summer. Included in that contract was a clause allowing the keeper to move on at 14 days notice, but it emerged that the selfish custodian had taken his employers completely by surprise.

As manager Bobby Williamson waited to hear from his player first-hand — with negotiations in Spain continuing — he adopted a typically philosophical stance.

"This was a big surprise for us, there's no denying that," said the man who led 'Killie' to the Scottish Cup in May.

"We still haven't heard from the guy, I'm just presuming he has left, and once he leaves I wish him all the best.

"Drago's priority always is Drago, and it always has been. It was a big struggle to get him to sign his contract in the summer, because he made it clear he wanted to go abroad.

"I think he feel he will strengthen his case for the World Cup if he is playing in Spain, and I know how much that means to him."

FA CUP

Arsenal squeezed through to the fourth round of the English F.A. Cup after escaping from a penalty shoot-out to beat struggling Port Vale in a replay.

Sheffield Wednesday were also taken to penalties by Second Division high-flyers Watford, winning the shoot-out 5-3, while another Premier League side, Aston Villa, beat Portsmouth 1-0.

"It was a hell of a battle really," said Arsenal midfielder Ray Parlour after the clubs were locked at 1-1 after extra time. Arsenal now meet former team mate Paul Merson's First Division club Middlesbrough.

Port Vale, 20th in the First Division, had lost their last seven league games but were bolstered by the memory of their greatest Cup exploit a decade previously.

Then, after just one win in 14 games, they beat Arsenal's London rivals Tottenham Hotspur 2-1.

It looked as if another big scalp was about to be claimed when 22-year-old midfielder Wayne Corden scored his first goal for the club with a 112th minute equaliser that sent the match to penalties.

Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp had put Arsenal ahead in the 100th minute with a long-range effort, the first goal in 190 minutes play between the sides.

England goalkeeper David Seaman pulled off a fine save from Ian Bogie and Arsenal squeaked through 4-3 when Allen Tankard drilled his shot way over the bar.

Wright was ruled offside for a header into the net in the 62nd and then fired a shot wildly into the crowd ten minutes later after being set clear on goal.

Wednesday saw off Watford, second in Division Two, 5-3 on penalties, after ending the match 0-0. Goalkeeper Kevin Pressman stepped up to take the winning kick even though his team had Italian Paolo di Canio sent-off in the 26th minute for a foul followed by abusive language.

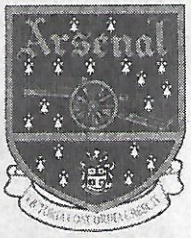
Aston Villa's Yugoslav international Savo Milosevic killed off struggling Portsmouth's hopes with a 20th minute flick over the keeper at Villa Park.

The UEFA Cup quarter-finalists now play local rivals West Bromwich Albion in the next round.

Portsmouth, bottom of the First Division with just six wins in 25 league matches, had led the initial clash 2-0 but they rarely threatened in the replay under caretaker manager Keith Waldon.

It was Portsmouth's first game since they sacked manager Terry Fenwick (a day after chairman Terry Venables left the club).

First Division Wolverhampton Wanderers beat Third Division Darlington 4-0 in a third round tie to set up a clash with league rivals Charlton.



Book Review

'LEFT FOOT IN THE GRAVE'

by Garry Nelson

By Stuart Jones

Expecting to take a while to wade through this book, two days later it was read. Having not seen the author's first book ('Left Foot Forward'), I was not quite sure what to expect. Nelson was now player/coach of Torquay and this was a season review with day-by-day incidents recorded.

He does not take any backward steps and looks at the running of a club from behind the scenes as none that I have read before.

Nelson looks at what it is like playing in the Third Division, what happens when negotiating with players, how much of a struggle it is to keep the team up the top when there is no cash coming in to support you, and the impact crowds make on teams.

He also looks at the big issues throughout the 1996-97 season, and there are plenty, from Gascoigne's marital problems to police officers claiming compensation for the Hillsborough disaster, to the Fashanu trial.

You will not be able to put this book down. It is an easy read, not filled with highly technical formulas for winning or a thesis on why things go the way they do.

You can see the emotions changing from the positive of pre-season to the despair of the end of season inquest on what went wrong. As he is a player/coach you also get a glimpse of on field antics.

Any supporter of football will read this book and sympathise with Nelson's, and Torquay's, ups and downs, more often down than up as it turns out.

Torquay finished bottom of the league in 1997, so it was up to the new manager, Kevin Hodges, and his staff Steve McCall and Garry Nelson to turn things around.

This is no fiction, it all happened. Indeed Mr Brock and I were over when part of this season took place and it is great to see what we saw from another's perspective.

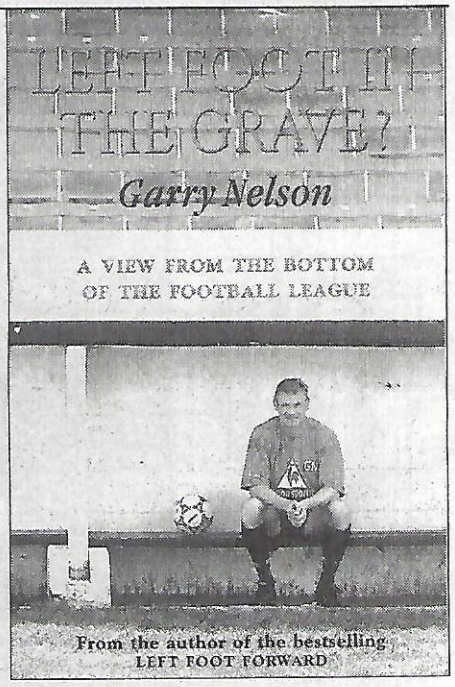
There are a couple of Aussies mentioned in the book, including a youngster from Melbourne who had trials with the club after not being taken on by Motherwell in Scotland.

As a Carlisle fan it was also interesting to read views of my team from our opponents' eyes, and if you do support a team that was in the Third Division in 1996/97, then your team is sure to be mentioned, and many are analysed by the author.

Micky Brock, ABSW's editor, has met the author and was very impressed with Garry Nelson.

Of all the books I read in 1997, I recommend this one for the library of any real football fan.

Do yourselves a favour and go out and get a copy.



Weird & Wonderful

By Stuart Jones

1950-51

The English Football League was expanded this season with four teams entering a larger, but still divided, Division Three.

The clubs elected being Colchester United, Gillingham, Scunthorpe & Lindsay United and Shrewsbury Town. All three still play in the league today. The top two divisions remained at 22 teams each.

In Division One the league title returned to London and, for the first time, to Tottenham Hotspurs. Spurs finished four points clear of Manchester United (who now added their fourth second place in the league in the five campaigns since the War), and part of that great Spurs side was a man who would coach England to their World Cup triumph in 1966 — Sir Alf Ramsey. He had signed from Southampton in a record deal for a defender at the time.

Blackpool finished a full ten points behind Spurs in third place. The fight to avoid relegation went right down to the wire with Chelsea, Sheffield Wednesday, and Everton fighting for the two spots. Wednesday were two points behind Everton and equal with Chelsea on points but behind on goal percentage. They needed to defeat Everton at home and hope Chelsea lose at Stamford Bridge against Bolton on the final day. The Sheffield club did their part by defeating Everton 6-0, and thus relegating them. However the Trotters did them no favours as Chelsea won 4-0, therefore saving their own skins on goal percentage.

In the Second Division, another much more recently knighted player was helping Preston win the title. Flying winger Tom Finney — once described by the great Bill Shankly as the best player he had ever played with — was aiding the Lancashire club back into the top flight, five points clear of Manchester City. At least for the blue side of Manchester it meant promotion back to Division One. However, Cardiff City were just a win away from going back into the top English league, and at the bottom Chesterfield and Grimsby were relegated.

In Division Three North, Rotherham finished seven points clear of second placed Mansfield, and nine clear of third placed Carlisle United. Rotherham had scored 103 goals in the 46 league matches, whilst Mansfield were the only side to be undefeated at home in the entire football league. New Brighton finished last and the side that had promised so much when they first began, played its last football league game and would soon fold.

Nottingham Forest won by six points from Norwich in the South of Division Three with Crystal Palace finishing bottom (Forest had scored 110 goals in their campaign). Scunthorpe and Lindsay United finished the best of the new clubs, twelfth in the northern section of Division Three.

After scoring identical victories in the semi-finals of the FA Cup, (0-0 draw then 2-1 in the replays), Newcastle United (victors over Wolves), and Blackpool (conquerors of Birmingham City), played each other in the final in front of a crowd of over 100,000. In the Blackpool side was a man also to be knighted later in life, Stanley Matthews, but it was the 'Knight of Tyneside' who would mark this game as his own. 'Wor' Jackie Milburn scored both goals in the Final to take the FA Cup back to the far north east city of Newcastle. He had claimed, for a Geordie, all that mattered was success in the FA Cup, and went about proving it. His first goal came from a poor Matthews pass (as he admits himself), and the second was set-up by a backheel outside the penalty area from a team mate. For Blackpool it was their second Final loss in four Cup campaigns.

Welsh dominance continued in the Southern League in the form of Merthyr Tydfil. They finished six points clear of Hereford and scored a record 156 goals in 44 games including a 10-0 thrashing of Bedford. In the Southern League Cup, Guildford won the first-leg of the Final over Tydfil 4-3, however a 3-1 victory in the second game gave the Merthyr side the Southern double for the second time (they also took out the Welsh Cup). Also, Kettering Town and Llanelly joined the league.

In Scotland, Hibernian's recent rise to prominence, third two seasons prior and second in the last campaign, came to a head when they won Division A a full ten points clear of Rangers. They defeated Rangers 4-1 at home and drew 1-1 away through the league season. At the bottom Falkirk were clearly last, with Clyde also relegated. Four other teams finished within two points of Clyde and just avoided the dreaded drop.

Queen of South and Stirling Albion both returned to the top flight at the first attempt, with goal percentage seeing South go up as champions. In fact the last match was the championship decider with Queen of the South winning 1-0 at home, at Palmerston Park, over Stirling Albion. Alloa finished bottom of the Scottish League tables.

The League Cup was played in October 1950 and Hibs lost 3-0 to Motherwell. For the second successive season neither of the 'big' Glasgow clubs made it, and it was the first time that one of the two major Edinburgh clubs had graced the final of this competition. Rangers were tipped out of the Scottish FA Cup by Hibernian (at Ibrox) in the second round, but they went on to lose to their League Cup rivals Motherwell 2-3 in the Semi-Final.

To add to Rangers poor season, with no trophies won, Celtic defeated Raith 3-2 in the other semi-final. Amidst predictions of a goal fest given the scores in the semis, the only goal of the Final at Hampden Park went to Celtic, and so finally, on April 21, 1951, a Glasgow side had their hands on some silverware.

Around Europe the Champions were:

Austria: SK Rapid Wien
Belgium: RSC Anderlecht
Bulgaria: CDNA Sofia (Cup - CDNA Sofia)
France: OGC Nice (Cup - RC Strasbourg)
East Germany: Chemie Leipzig
West Germany: Kaiserslautern
Holland: PSV Eindhoven
Italy: AC Milan
Poland: Gwardia Krakow (Cup - Unia Chorzow)
Portugal: Sporting CP (Cup - Benfica)
Russia: CDSA Moskva (Cup - CDSA Moskva)
Romania: CCA Bucuresti (Cup - CCA Bucuresti)
Spain: Club Atletico De Madrid (Cup - CF Barcelona)
Sweden: Malmo FF (Cup - Malmo FF)
Switzerland: Lausanne Sports (Cup - FC La Chaux-De-Fonds)

ENGLAND

LEAGUE TABLES

DIVISION 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tott'ham	42	17	2	2	54	21	8	8	5	28	23	60
Man Utd	42	14	4	3	42	16	10	4	7	32	24	56
B'pool	42	12	6	3	43	19	8	4	9	36	34	50
Newcastle	42	10	6	5	36	22	8	7	6	26	31	49
Arsenal	42	11	5	5	47	28	8	4	9	26	28	47
Midboro	42	12	7	2	51	25	6	4	11	25	40	47
P'mouth	42	8	10	3	39	30	8	5	8	32	38	47
Bolton	42	11	2	8	31	20	8	5	8	33	41	45
Liverpool	42	11	5	5	28	25	5	6	10	25	34	43
Burnley	42	9	7	5	27	16	5	7	9	21	27	42
Derby	42	10	5	6	53	33	6	3	12	28	42	40
S'land	42	8	9	4	30	21	4	7	10	33	52	40
Stoke	42	10	5	6	28	19	3	9	9	22	40	40
Wolves	42	9	3	9	44	30	6	5	10	30	31	38
A Villa	42	9	6	8	39	29	3	7	11	27	39	37
WBA	42	7	4	10	30	27	6	7	8	23	34	37
Charlton	42	9	4	8	35	31	5	5	11	28	49	37
Fulham	42	8	5	8	35	37	5	6	10	17	31	37
Huds'fld	42	8	4	9	40	40	7	2	12	24	52	36
Chelsea	42	9	4	8	31	25	3	4	14	22	40	32
Shef Wed	42	9	6	6	43	32	3	2	16	21	51	32
Everton	42	7	5	9	26	35	5	3	13	22	51	32

DIVISION 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Preston	42	16	3	2	53	18	10	2	9	38	31	57
Man City	42	12	6	3	53	25	7	8	6	36	36	52
Cardiff	42	13	7	1	36	20	4	9	8	17	25	50
B'ham	42	12	6	3	37	20	8	3	10	27	33	49
Leeds	42	14	4	3	36	17	6	4	11	27	38	48
B'burn	42	13	3	5	39	27	6	5	10	26	39	46
Coventry	42	15	3	3	51	25	4	4	13	24	34	45
Shef Utd	42	11	4	6	44	27	5	8	8	28	35	44
Brentford	42	13	3	5	44	25	5	5	11	31	49	44
Hull	42	12	5	4	47	28	4	6	11	27	42	43
Doncaster	42	9	6	6	37	32	6	7	8	27	38	43
Soton	42	10	9	2	38	27	5	4	12	28	46	43
West Ham	42	10	5	6	44	33	6	5	10	24	36	42
Leicester	42	10	4	7	42	28	5	7	9	26	30	41
Barnsley	42	8	5	7	42	22	6	5	10	32	46	40
QPR	42	13	5	3	47	25	2	5	14	24	57	40
Notts Cty	42	7	7	7	37	34	6	6	9	24	26	39
Swansea	42	14	1	6	34	25	2	3	16	20	52	36
Luton	42	7	9	5	34	23	2	5	14	23	47	32
Bury	42	9	4	8	33	27	3	4	14	27	59	32
Chest'fld	42	7	7	7	30	28	2	5	14	14	41	30
Grimsby	42	6	8	7	37	38	2	4	15	24	57	28

DIVISION THREE NORTH

Rotherham United 71, Mansfield Town 64, Carlisle United 62, Tranmere Rovers 59, Lincoln City 58, Bradford 54, Bradford City 52, Gateshead 50, Crewe Alexandra 48, Stockport County 48, Rochdale 45, Scunthorpe & Lindsay United 44, Chester 43, Wrexham 42, Oldham Athletic 40, Hartlepool United 39, York City 39, Darlington 39, Barrow 38, Shrewsbury Town 37, Southport 36, Halifax town 34, Accrington Stanley 32, New Brighton 30.

DIVISION THREE SOUTH

Nottingham Forest 70, Norwich City 64, Reading 57, Plymouth Argyle 57, Millwall 56, Bristol Rovers 55, Southend United 52, Ipswich Town 52, AFC Bournemouth 51, Bristol City 51, Newport County 47, Port Vale 45, Brighton & Hove Albion 43, Exeter City 42, Walsall 40, Colchester United 40, Swindon Town 40, Aldershot 40, Leyton Orient 38, Torquay United 37, Northampton Town 36, Gillingham 35, Watford 29, Crystal Palace 27.

SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Merthyr Tydfil 66, Hereford United 61, Guildford City 54, Chelmsford City 54, Llanelly 51, Cheltenham Town 50, Headington United 47, Torquay United Res 46, Exeter City Res 44, Weymouth 44, Tonbridge 44, Gloucester City 43, Yeovil Town 41, Worcester City 41, Bath City 40, Dartford 39, Bedford Town 39, Gravesend & Northfleet 38, Kettering Town 37, Lovells Athletic 37, Kidderminster Harriers 35, Barry Town 33, Hastings United 28.

SCOTLAND

DIVISION A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hibernian	30	22	4	4	78	26	48
Rangers	30	17	4	9	64	37	38
Dundee	30	15	8	7	47	30	38
Hearts	30	16	5	9	72	45	37
Aberdeen	30	15	5	10	61	50	35
Partick T	30	13	7	10	57	48	33
Celtic	30	12	5	13	48	46	29
Raith R	30	13	2	15	52	52	28
Mot'well	30	11	6	13	58	65	28
East Fife	30	10	8	12	48	66	28
St Mirren	30	9	7	14	35	51	25
Morton	30	10	4	16	47	59	24
T Lanark	30	11	2	17	40	51	24
Airdrie	30	10	4	16	52	67	24
Clyde	30	8	7	15	37	57	23
Falkirk	30	7	4	19	35	81	18

DIVISION B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Queen Sth	30	21	3	6	69	35	45
Stirling Alb	30	21	3	6	78	44	45
Ayr Utd	30	15	6	9	64	40	36
Dundee Utd	30	16	4	10	78	58	36
St Johnstone	30	14	5	11	68	53	33
Queens Park	30	13	7	10	56	53	33
Hamilton	30	12	8	10	65	49	32
Albion R	30	14	4	12	56	51	32
Dumbarton	30	12	5	13	52	53	29
Dunfermline	30	12	4	14	58	73	28
Cowdenbeath	30	12	3	15	61	57	27
Kilmarnock	30	8	8	14	44	49	24
Arbroath	30	8	5	17	46	78	21
Forfar Ath	30	9	3	18	43	76	21
Stenhousemuir	30	9	2	19	51	60	20
Alloa Ath	30	7	4	19	58	98	18

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WORLD NEWS TITBITS

DRUGS IN MEXICO

Mexico captain Claudio Suarez will not be disciplined after an allegedly positive dope test because of "an administrative error," FIFA said, although they did not specify what error had occurred.

Suarez was said to have tested positive for the banned substance nandrolone after Mexico's Confederations' Cup match against Brazil in Saudi Arabia last month.

FIFA also said in a statement that it took into account further tests Suarez had undergone of his own accord, the results of which were all negative.

TV RIGHTS WAR

Soccer's next legal battle could be over clubs claiming the right to sell exclusive rights to their games, a British-based sports lawyer said.

"Collective sales by governing bodies or leagues of television rights to their events are now being challenged in Spain, Portugal and Germany," said Nicholas Couchman of London-based Townley Solicitors.

He said the days when a national football federation sold television rights for a competition could be numbered.

"Under European competition law that is questionable as a system," said Couchman, speaking at Football Expo '98, soccer's first global trade show.

He continued by saying that the concept had been successfully challenged in some European countries, including Spain, Germany and Holland. "This is on the basis that individual clubs should be free to be able to realise their own television revenues in matches in which they participate or the ones they host at their stadium."

He said this meant big clubs like Manchester United, Barcelona and Juventus could increase their incomes by selling exclusive television rights for their games — leaving the small clubs by the wayside.

This was starting to happen in other leagues and would eventually affect all football competitions if left unchecked.

"If it happens in Europe, it would happen everywhere and it's already happening in Brazil," he said. Attendance figures for Brazilian matches have plummeted since virtually every game became available on television and may clubs are in dire financial straits.

BASTIA SIGN STRIKER

Nicosia's Croat striker Anjian Kozniku has transferred to French first division Bastia for $450,000.

"The transfer has been completed and Kozniku left this morning," the APOEL general manager said .

"It was decided to give him up because the economic terms offered by Bastia were advantageous," he added.

Kozniku joined APOEL in September 1997. He was Nicosia top scorer with 12 goals to date in the league, and an additional two scored in Cyprus cup matches.

SPANISH NEWS

Spanish club Deportivo Coruna reached agreement to end a long-running contractual dispute with former coach Carlos Alberto Silva.

The conflict had led to a bizarre incident in which Silva tried to rejoin the club in an attempt to prove that his leaving had been a case of dismissal rather than resignation.

The club will pay $230,000 severance pay to the Brazilian, who had claimed 50 million pesetas $400,000.

Deportivo are reported to be still looking for a long-term replacement for coach Jose Manuel Corral.

Former Betis trainer Lorenzo Serra Ferrer said he had turned down an offer from Deportivo after consulting Barcelona, where he now manages the junior sides.

Racing Santander have taken out an unusual insurance policy against relegation to the Second Division.

In the event of dropping out of the First Division Racing would be paid $9.8 million to compensate for the loss of lucrative television royalties.

The policy, thought to be the first of its kind, will cost the club $1.6 million over two seasons.

Racing, currently in their fifth successive season in the First Division after six years in the second and third, are currently drifting in mid-table.

CESAR, BOOTH WANT OUT

Borussia Dortmund's Brazilian defender Julio Cesar and Scottish striker Scott Booth are talking of leaving at the end of the season.

Cesar, who has been with the European Cup winners since 1994, has recently been sidelined with a knee injury.

"The injured knee is okay now so I could see out my contract in Dortmund. But my head says no and I'm sure my head will win," the defender was quoted as saying in German reports from the club's training camp in Portugal.

Cesar is tied to Borussia until 1999. "Cesar's thoughts of leaving have never been as serious as they are now," said Dortmund general manager Michael Meier.

Booth, who joined Dortmund from Aberdeen at the end of last season, has been unable to command a regular first-team place. He is reported to have received an offer from Dortmund's Bundesliga rivals MSV Duisburg.

"I'd like to play more often, so that's why I'd like a move," Booth said.

Both his and Cesar's announcements were the latest headache for coach Nevio Scala.

Goalkeeper Stefan Klos and defender Knut Reinhardt are also thinking seriously about leaving when their contracts expire at the end of the season and Scala has also been in a feud with midfielder Andy Moeller.

SERIE A'S FINEST

AC Milan captain Paolo Maldini has been called the world's best defender — but that doesn't mean he's rated as the best in Italy at the moment.

That honour goes to France's Lilian Thuram, the pillar of Parma's usually rock-solid defence and whose rise to the top of the Italian game has coincided with one of

the more lacklustre periods of Maldini's brilliant career.

Maldini and Thuram, a 26-year-old native of the Caribbean island of Guadalupe, were set to clash last Sunday when Milan travel to Parma's Tardini Stadium.

Maldini, 29, was called the world's best defender in 1995 when he finished second behind team mate George Weah as FIFA's Player of the Year.

But this week Maldini was far from the top in the season player rankings of Gazzetta dello Sport, Italy's best-selling sports daily, while Thuram was declared Serie A's best defender so far this season.

WORLD STOP PRESS

FIFA WON'T CHANGE PLANS

World soccer's governing body FIFA said it was not planning to change ticket allocations for this year's World Cup, despite mounting criticism.

The Dutch, Belgian and English soccer federations, along with UEFA president Lenart Johansson, have expressed disenchantment with FIFA's distribution system, which sees about 60% of the 2.5 million World Cup tickets going to French supporters.

"Obviously we will look at any requests for more tickets, but the nature of the system for distributing tickets is that all games are treated alike," said FIFA spokesman Keith Cooper.

"You have to understand that no ticket distribution system will be perfect. There is always one game or another that is going to attract more interest."

A June 13 preliminary round clash between Belgium and the Netherlands in Paris is at the centre of the escalating controversy.

The Belgians have been told they will only receive 5,400 tickets for the match, and the Belgian FA say they have already had 120,000 requests for tickets!

The Dutch are only being allocated 4,700 tickets for the match against South Korea in Marseille on June 20, and just 2,200 tickets for the match against Mexico in St Etienne on June 23.

FIFA confirmed it has received written requests from both associations for more tickets, but said it is currently not in a position to increase allotments.

"It's not unreasonable to ask for more but it doesn't mean they will get it," added Cooper. "The details of the ticket distribution system have been known for some time."

The ticketing problem could also become a security problem. The Dutch FA is worried that supporters may turn to what is expected to be thriving black market if they cannot obtain tickets through their association.

Both Dutch and Belgian associations are keen that their supporters should be properly segregated. The Dutch fans in particular have a reputation for hooliganism.

"A number of the fans will be able to get tickets via friends and relatives in France. Then we don't know where they will be sitting which could become a security problem," said Dutch FA spokesman Rob De Leede.

The English FA are set to meet with French organisers over similar concerns, because English fans also have a bad reputation as hooligans.

Sir Brian Hayes, deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and the FA's special security adviser, will take part in a two-day meeting in Paris that will discuss security for the tournament.

The FA has been allocated just eight per cent of the tickets for each of England's first round matches against Tunisia, Romania and Colombia.

There are growing fears that unless there is an increase in the allotment for the England matches, supporters will travel to France without tickets and purchase them on the black market.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP ON TV IN USA

ABC and ESPN have announced they will combine to televise all 32 matches of the Women's 1998 World Cup soccer tournament in the United States.

However financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The third Women's World Cup, which will be held in the United States over three weeks in June and July of 1999, will receive an unprecedented 64 hours of coverage.

ABC will broadcast the opening game of the tournament on Saturday, June 19th, featuring the United States playing at Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey. It will also air the championship game, which is scheduled to take place at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, on Saturday, July 10.

ABC may also broadcast a semi-final match from Stanford Stadium in Palo Alto, California, on Sunday, July 4, if it involves the USA. If the USA does not advance to the semi-finals, ESPN or ESPN2 will carry the match from Stanford Stadium.

ESPN and ESPN2, cable sports channels owned by the ABC network, will telecast the remaining 29 matches, with ESPN carrying six matches (including four first-round games).

Among the ESPN games are the anticipated USA quarter-final at Jack Kent Cooke Stadium in suburban Washington, DC, on Thursday, July 1, and the other semi-final, which will take place at Foxboro Stadium in Massachusetts on Independence Day.

Of the 32 games, 27 will be broadcast live and five shown on a same-day delay.

NIGERIA ON LOOKOUT

Nigeria are banking on discovering fresh talent in a squad of 20 unfamiliar players chosen for a four-nation World Cup warm-up tournament in Hong Kong.

The squad named by the Nigerian Football Association (NFA) for the competition starting at the end of the month, comprises 16 foreign-based players and four who play for Nigerian clubs.

"I don't know the entire squad so it's an experimental one," new Yugoslav born coach Bora Milutinovic told Reuters by telephone from Abuja.

"The national team regulars cannot be released by their clubs abroad, so I relied on advice from two local coaches I recently picked to work with me.

"But I believe I will discover new players from this squad to join the regulars for a strong World Cup squad."

Nigeria's fellow World Cup qualifiers, Iran and Chile, and the hosts, complete the quartet for the tournament (January 28-31).

It will be Milutinovic's first assignment since he was appointed in December.

Apart from the the Hong Kong tournament, the NFA has lined up matches against fellow World Cup qualifiers Jamaica, Germany, Yugoslavia and the Netherlands to prepare for France '98.

Squad:

Goalkeepers: Willy Okpara (Orlando Pirates), Ike Shorounmu (FC Zurich), Andrew Aikhuomogbe (Katsina United)

Defenders: Uche Okafor (Kansas City), Alhassan Mohammed (Julius Berger), Ajibade Babalade (Korea Cheetah FC), Patrick Paschal (Glenclerbirligi), Ganiyu Ajide (Julius Berger), Kingsley Obiekwu (Go Ahead Eagles)

Midfielders: Festus Okougha (Sparta Rotterdam), Steven Musa (FC Saabrucken), Karibe Ojigwe (Kaiserslautern), Emmanuel Ebiede (Heerenveen FC), Jero Siakpere (Reggiana), Garba Mohammed (Kano Pillars).

Strikers: Gabriel Okolosi (Waldorf Maanheim), Chukwu Ndukwe (Mamelodi Sundowns), Kenneth Zeigbo (Legia Dawoo), Henry Onwuzuruike (Heerenveen FC), Edith Agoye (No club).

MATCH-FIXING RIFE IN CHINA

A survey has revealed that 12 of China's top football clubs engaged in match-rigging by bribing referees.

The Baokan Wencai said the 'sad result' was discovered by Liaoshen Evening News, a daily in Shenyang northern Liaoning province, which sent out questionnaires to 16 division A and B clubs in China.

The report said 12 clubs responded, admitting they had offered cash bribes to referees, and that there were referees who had accepted the money.

The report said most clubs refused to answer a question on how much they had spent on referees during the 1997 season but one club stated its bribery expenses were about 200,000 yuan ($30,000).

Ten of the clubs admitted that they had substantially increased their expenditure on referees in the 1997 season compared with the previous three years, the report said.

STARS BUT NO CHAMPIONSHIP

Rio de Janeiro's major clubs have been proudly presenting their new big-name signings to admiring fans this week. All they need now is a championship to play in!

Bebeto: Seven clubs in 18 months.

Flamengo unveiled five recruits, including World Cup stalwart Romario, current internationals Ze Roberto and Rodrigo and Cruzeiro's South American Cup hero Palhinha.

Vasco da Gama have lined up striker Luizao to replace recently departed Edmundo, the star of last year's Brazilian championship, and are aiming to add Luizao's Deportivo La Coruna team mate, Djalminha, to their ranks.

And Botafogo announced they would become the latest stop on veteran international striker Bebeto's seemingly endless world tour.

Bebeto, who has changed clubs seven times since mid-1996, will line up alongside Tulio, one of the most prolific scorers in the Brazilian game (he is back at the club after a year-long absence).

Apart from Bebeto, who was due to formally sign for Botafogo last week, all have begun training with their new teams. But what for?

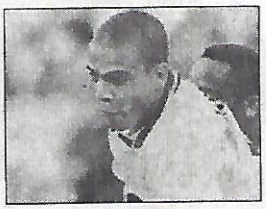
The Rio de Janeiro soccer federation has promised the traditional Rio championship will start on January 21, though nobody has yet seen a fixture list.

Flamengo, Botafogo and Fluminense say they do not want to take part in the Rio championship until mid-March.

Before that they want to compete in what they believe will be a more lucrative tournament involving themselves and the major clubs from Sao Paulo. They also have their sights set on the Copa Brasil, a nationwide knockout tournament.

WORLD 'PLAYER OF THE YEAR'

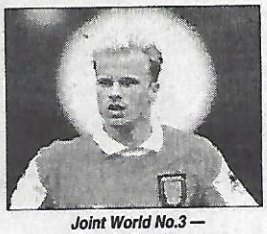
Brazilian striker Ronaldo confirmed he was in a class of his own when named as FIFA's 1997 'World Player of the Year', winning the coveted award for the second consecutive year.



World No.1 — Ronaldo

The Inter Milan marksman polled 86 first-place votes, out of a possible 121, from a panel of coaches and soccer personalities. He beat compatriot Roberto Carlos.

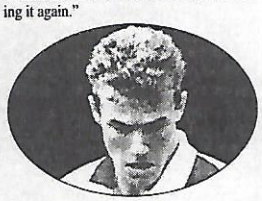
Dutchman Dennis Bergkamp finished third equal with France's Zinedine Zidane, and Spain's Raul was fifth.



Joint World No.3 — Dennis Bergkamp

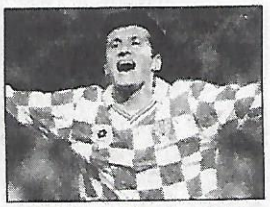
Ronaldo, who was last month named 'European Footballer of the Year' by 'France Football' magazine and World 'Player of the Year' by 'World Soccer' magazine, took FIFA's 1996 award when he was at Barcelona.

The Brazilian said last year's prize gave him extra motivation. "It helped me to work. And I would have been sad not having it again."



Joint World No. 8 — Alan Shearer

Ronaldo paid tribute to runner-up Roberto Carlos, the defender whom he described as "a very mighty player who has improved a lot lately. He is a friend of mine and I have a lot of respect for him."



Joint World No.3 — Davor Suker

Ronaldo said his dream was to win the World Cup — the one stage on which he has yet to prove himself — in this year's Finals in France.

He was a member of the Brazil squad which won the tournament in the United States in 1994 but, aged 17, he did not get a game, something he cites as his greatest disappointment to date.

Asked if he could beat the record of 13 goals set by French striker Just Fontaine in the 1958 Finals, Ronaldo said: "It's quite a record. I would like to break it but the main thing is to win the World Cup."

TOP TEN

1 RONALDO (Bra)
2 ROBERTO CARLOS (Bra)
3 Dennis Bergkamp (Hol) (equal)
Zinedine Zidane (Fra) (equal)
Raul (Spa) (equal)
Alessandro Del Piero (Ita) (equal)
Davor Suker (Cro) (equal)
8 Gabriel Batistuta (Arg) (equal)
Alan Shearer (Eng) (equal)
10 Leonardo (Bra) (equal)
Peter Schmeichel (Den) (equal)

Brazilian players voted World's Best.

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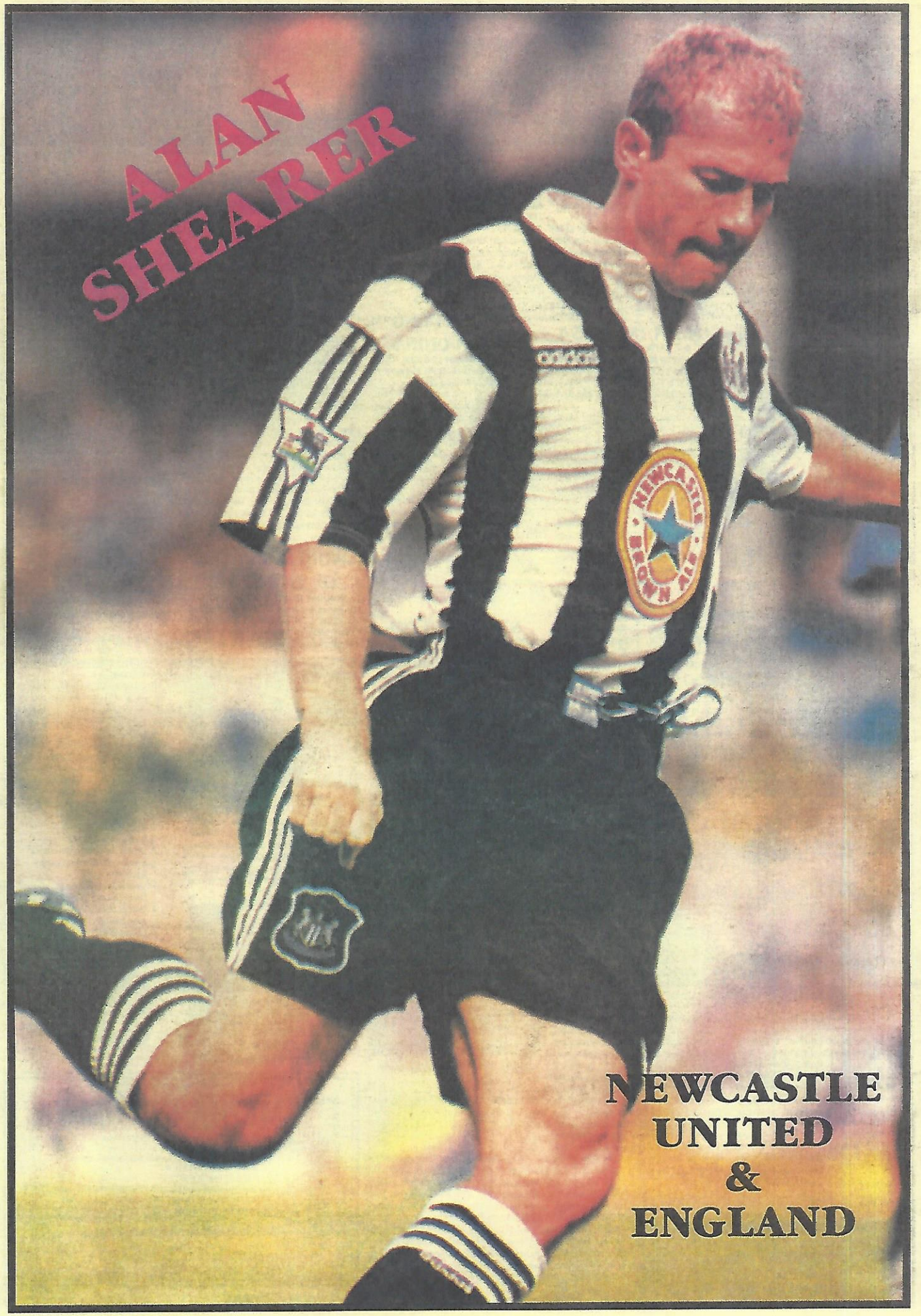
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